CHRISTIANITY

IN

SOME OF ITS LEADING ASPECTS.

Edinburgh:
Printed by R. and R. Clark,
FOR
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

London..... HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
Oxford..... J. H. PARKER.
Cambridge. MACMILLAN & CO.
Dublin..... JAMES M'GLASHAN.
Glasgow ... DAVID BRYCE.

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ITS LEADING ASPECTS.

BY

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EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1854.

PREFACE.

EVERY one who keeps pace with the religious literature of his age must be struck with the number of books which bear on their title-page the word "Christianity."

It is an extremely general term this, and the first feeling of the mind is one of disappointment, if not of positive dissatisfaction with what is so indefinite. And yet, after all, it is a fine old, time-hallowed word this *Christianity*. It can plead high antiquity, if not divine authority in its favour. The disciples were first called *Christians* in Antioch. Nor would it be easy to find a single word, a general term—and we must have general terms—that better answers the purpose, embodying, as it does, that One Name in which it all originates, exhibiting that Divine Person who is the central object of it. When rightly understood, it

brings us back to Christ himself, and to the glass of the gospel in which his blessed image may be discerned; and thus, losing all its abstractedness and indefiniteness, it becomes a term of vast meaning and compass, at once broad and distinct, at once catholic and scriptural. There is nothing narrow or sectarian about it, and it reminds us therefore—and do we not need to be reminded—that there is a substantial unity of faith as to the great facts and truths of the gospel among all who have been brought to bow in reverence to the inspired volume—an unity which they are more likely to become sensible of, in proportion as they find attacks made upon the very *substance* of their religion.

There is a growing feeling upon this point. And is it not this that has led to the fact to which we have adverted at the outset? It is now no longer a question about various forms of Christian truth. But it has come to this,—*Have we a Christianity at all?* Is there anything in the gospel of a distinct, substantive, specific character? It is not so much its form that is assailed as its substance. We are thus driven to the defence of

the citadel rather than of the outworks. Christianity is being tried upon its merits. And need we be afraid of this? Should we not rather come boldly forward, and try, at least, as we best can, to show what Christianity really is—to exhibit its *inner truth*, its native grandeur, its perfect adaptation to man.

If the reader keep these things in view, it will help him the better to understand the direction of much of the most interesting religious literature of the day. It will explain the aim and end of the following chapters. They are not wholly indeed, but in a great measure, *for the times*. They are not the result of any very definite and preconceived plan, but arose one after the other from associations in the writer's own mind, which the reader might not understand, or if he understood, might not feel much interest in. They would not have been published at all, so imperfect are they as exhibitions of Christianity in its more deep and spiritual aspects, if others had not thought them not unsuited for a certain class of readers.

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I.

CHRISTIANITY A LIFE.

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—JOHN xvii. 3.

IT is of great importance to entertain wide and comprehensive views of Christianity. Almost all errors have arisen from taking partial views of it; and perhaps the best way, after all, of counteracting these partial views is not by attacking them directly and separately, but by bringing them into harmonious combination, and showing that there is really no contradiction and incompatibility between them. There is a greater or less measure of truth in each of them, but not the whole truth. They are but half-truths at best, some of them only mere fractions of the truth, which have seized hold of the mind, to the exclusion of other portions and aspects of it; and it does appear to me, that he would confer the greatest benefit on our common

Christianity who, gathering these scattered and fragmentary conceptions together into one grand whole, would present it to the contemplation of men in all its dimensions and proportions, in all its grandeur and symmetry. For this end he must lay aside all party-spirit, and, taking his stand upon the broad and elevated platform of Scripture, endeavour to survey with minuteness at once and breadth of view the wide field that stretches out before him and around him. Nowhere but in the Bible is this broad, entire, universal Christianity to be found; nor is it to be found even there wrapped up in a single verse (except by implication, a method which is open to many risks), but it must be sought for with painstaking care and diligence throughout every one of its inspired pages.

In the passage before us we have a very full exhibition of Christianity, fitted to correct certain partial and one-sided views of it. Various important and essential elements are brought forward as entering into it, and constituting it. First of all, there is the vital element—*This is life eternal;* then there is the intellectual element—*That they might know;* then there is the personal element —*Thee;* then there is the theistic element—*The only true God;* and then there is the evangelic

element—*Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Not one of these elements can be left out without materially injuring Christianity—without impairing its fulness, and weakening its efficiency. Leave out the first, the vital element, and you reduce it to a mere form. Leave out the second, the intellectual element, and you make Christianity a wholly emotional thing—a mere matter of feeling. Leave out the third, the personal element, and you deprive it of all form and substance. Leave out the fourth, the theistic element, and you lose sight of its ethical or moral character. Leave out the last, the evangelic element, and you bring it down to the level of natural religion. Let us advert to each of these elements separately, and then let us consider what a beautiful and harmonious whole is the result.

First of all, then, we take up the *vital or life element*—"It is life eternal." Christianity is a life. It is something more, indeed, as we shall see as we advance. This is only one aspect of it; but it is a very important aspect. Christianity, we repeat, is a life: that is, real, personal, concrete Christianity is so. It is this, or it is nothing to me, so far as I am individually concerned. If it has not brought life to my soul, a new life to

which previously I was a stranger—a spiritual life, ay, a divine life—indicating plainly its origin to be of God by its desire to return to him in love, and trust, and fellowship,—if Christianity has not done this, there might as well be none *for me*, that is, for any good it has done me. There is still a Christianity revealed in the Bible, and experienced in the hearts of those who have actually embraced it, and come under its influence. But what is all this to me, if Christianity form not a part of my experience, of my history, of my inner life? Practically it is nothing. It is well, indeed, there is a Christianity independent of me—out of me altogether, and out of every man—exhibited, as to its ground, its nature, its effects, in the only inspired and authoritative standard of faith and practice. This is well; for by the continual holding up of this high, definite, fixed standard, I may be taught my deficiency, and my need of a decided change to constitute me a living embodiment of Christianity. But till this is the case, Christianity is, to all practical purposes, a name, and nothing but a name, to me. For only conceive that I should die in this state of separation from it, what end would it serve in reference to my moral destiny, except the melancholy one of making that destiny darker than it would have been if I had never

heard of it? There is a Christianity *without*, and there is a Christianity *within;* and it is right that, for certain purposes, they should be distinguished. But it is a grievous error when they are separated; and is it not a strange perversity in the human mind that leads to this separation? You believe there is an external, objective Christianity, consisting of a system of facts and truths revealed in Scripture. Right, most right. Never lose sight of this; let nothing shake your confidence in this. But why lose sight of this other point, that there is an internal, subjective Christianity, consisting of these facts and truths received into the mind, and given forth again, stamped with the person's own individuality—bearing the hues and forms of his own experience—the very breath and motion of his new-born existence? It is then and thus that Christianity becomes truly vital. It becomes then a life—"life eternal." The soul begins to live, in the true sense of that profound term—to live to God; nay, to live the very life of God—an immortal, blessed, spiritual life!

Yes; Christianity is a life. It is a great truth, and, we fear, too much lost sight of. There is need for its being brought forth from its obscurity, and urged unceasingly upon our hearers. Christianity is a life. Unfortunately this has be-

come the watchword of a school grievously unsound in its doctrinal theology. It is the one idea of their creed. Nevertheless, it is a truth, so far as it goes;—a deep truth—a grand and glorious truth—a much forgotten truth. And shall we leave them in possession of this great truth? Shall we be afraid to proclaim it, lest we be misunderstood? No; we will take from them any advantage they may have obtained from the statement of it. We will show that it is not peculiar to them. We, too, will raise the cry—Christianity is a life. We will let it be known how thoroughly we hold this truth, and in a far deeper sense than they do. For, while *their* life is a shallow, mystical, baseless, inexplicable thing—self-originated, fed from within—*ours* is a life that pervades and energises the whole soul—that is imparted from above—that is nourished from infinite fulness—that will bear scrutiny as to its nature and actings—that can be brought to a definite test—and that is conversant, not with the ideal, but with the real, the actual, the personal.

Thus do *we* hold Christianity to be a life—not in any mysterious, magical, mystical way, but in a manner consonant with Scripture at once and reason. How, then, is Christianity a life? It is so, because it is a system in connection with which

divine influence is imparted to quicken the soul "dead in trespasses and sins," raising up its prostrate powers, enlightening the understanding, awakening the conscience, renewing the will and affections. It is so, because it is a system which exhibits those views of the divine character that reawaken the soul's love and confidence. It is so, because it is a system which brings reconciliation, full forgiveness—grace, in short, in all the fulness of that comprehensive word.

Has Christianity thus vitalised our souls? Have we experienced its life-giving power? Can we say, "To me to live is Christ;" "Christ liveth in me?" Ah! these are expressions, the full import of which is known only to those to whom Christianity has become a life. And how few are these!

Secondly, *The intellectual or truth element*—"That they might know." Christianity is a life. It is a great truth this; and yet it is only a half-truth. You say, and you say perpetually, Christianity is a life. You denounce systems—you decry the letter, as you are pleased to call it, of Scripture—you abjure the creed of Christendom—you protest against the introduction of the intellect into the domain of religion, which, you say, is not an affair of the understanding, but—of

what? You can hardly tell. Either you know not well yourself, or you do not wish to be urged to explicitness on such a topic. Be that as it may, you are a determined opponent of intellectualism. Christianity, you insist, is a life—a matter of feeling—an intuition; it lies too deep to be fathomed—it defies expression—it shuns observation—it is something too fine, too ethereal, to be laid hold of, and manipulated by the rude hand of the theologian: its forms may vary, but there it is, the same divine, unchanging, immutable thing in all good men, in all ages. Christianity, in short, is not a creed, but a life.

There is an air of wisdom and of spiritualism in all this, that is very apt to impose upon shallow and undisciplined minds—minds not inured to much close and exact thinking. And, in point of fact, multitudes are led away by it, and are fast giving up all that is of a definite and substantive character in religion.

Now, waiving for the present many objections that might be urged against this new assault upon our doctrinal Christianity, we shall confine ourselves to this one objection, which is fatal to the whole theory. Christianity is a life. Be it so; but our difficulty is how, upon your principles, this life is originated. Let us see. Either the

life produces the Christianity, or the Christianity the life. If the former is the true state of the case, then we see not of what use Christianity is at all, since it is an effect and expression of life rather than its cause. If the latter is the true state of the case, then where is Christianity to be found anterior to its producing life? and by what channel does it reach the soul and quicken it?

Where is Christianity to be found anterior to its producing life in the soul? Now, we demand a distinct answer to this question. It is a point that must be settled beyond the possibility of doubt. There must be no uncertain sound given forth in reference to it. It will not do to refer us to something called a stream of life, flowing down, through all ages, from the Author of Christianity himself, enkindled in some mysterious way in the souls of those who conversed with him, and saw his glory. It will not do to refer us to something termed the universal Christian consciousness. This is only removing the difficulty a step farther back. The question still presses upon us, What is the origin and nature of this life—this consciousness which has all along existed in the church? We cannot prove a thing by itself. We are thus as much at sea as ever. Where is Christianity to be found? What is it? Where is that fountain whence life

in all ages—so far as it is true, genuine life, and not one or other of its many specious counterfeits —has issued? Where is that test by which the ever-varying and oft-times contradictory consciousness of those professing to be Christ's disciples may be tried? Is there such a fountain? Is there such a test? In the very nature of things there must be. This fountain, this test is the Bible. Here, and here only, is Christianity, in its true character and claims, clearly and authoritatively revealed. The Bible is the safe and sure deposit of the sacred treasure of Christianity throughout all ages. Opinions vary, systems change, churches rise and decay—the Bible alone is infallible and immutable. It holds the same language from age to age. In proportion as it is lost sight of, the life of the church declines; and every revival it experiences arises out of a return to this only rule and measure, origin and food of the spiritual life. Such, then, is the place that belongs to *the truth*, to doctrinal truth in this matter. We must not think or speak lightly of this. It is the glass in which we discern the image of our absent Lord. It is the revelation of his character and mission. It is the medium of our converse with him. It is the first, though not the ultimate ground of our faith. It is the

light that guides us to him, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead—in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—in whom we have eternal life. We must stand up for the truth—for God's truth—for it is a priceless treasure. We must be valiant for the truth upon the earth. This is a point on which we cannot afford to be neutral, and in which no compromise is lawful. We must take care, indeed, that it is the simple, unadulterated truth of Scripture we exalt to this supremacy over the human mind. But we must equally beware of that latitudinarianism which would lead us to ask the sceptical question of Pilate, What is truth?

This is the first point. Then the second is, *By what channel does the truth reach the soul, and quicken it?* Now, this is the place that belongs to the intellect—the intellect spiritually enlightened no doubt, but still the intellect. The truth must be known, must be intelligently embraced, ere it can impress its likeness on the mind. "Ye shall know the truth," says Christ, "and the truth shall make you free." There are many other passages in which the intellectual element is distinctly recognised. You cannot, therefore, banish the intellect from the sphere of religion (any more than any other portion of your complex nature)

without great injury. And whence this anxiety in certain quarters to effect a separation between religion and the intellect. The reason is plain. They are afraid of the intellect. They know that their religion is of so groundless, flimsy, unsubstantial a character, that it will not bear to be viewed in the light of the understanding. It is an unworthy stratagem to get rid of Scripture truth altogether, and sweep away one after another all the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel. It is life eternal, says our text, not to feel merely, or believe merely, but to KNOW. This, in fact, is the basis of the whole; for we must know ere we can either believe or feel. A religion devoid of intellectualism is wanting in depth and permanence. It is a flickering light that often leads astray; and in an age such as this, when error in every form is abroad, and truth in every form is questioned, it seems especially necessary that we should aim at being intelligent Christians; that we should know what we believe, and why we believe it; that we should be able to give a "reason for the hope that is in us;" that, in short, all the powers of our minds being put forth upon the truth, we should take so firm and comprehensive a grasp of it, that nothing can move us away from the faith. We confess ourselves to be exceedingly jealous for

the maintenance in our Christianity of the intellectual element, in its right sense, and in due proportion. For this it is, after all, that will invest our religion with such dignity and grandeur, as that it shall command the veneration of the world, who are but too ready to despise religious people for their want of intellectuality; and that will impart to our religion such strength and substance, as that it shall withstand the rude shocks to which it must be exposed in a world like this.

Thirdly, *The personal element*—"Thee." Christianity is a life. Let us keep hold of this truth. It is the leading, central idea. LIFE ETERNAL; this is the grand thought of the passage. Life! what is it? We must look more closely into this subject; we must endeavour to fathom this thing called life. Life! it is a very marvellous attribute this of life; it is the great mystery of the universe, the mystery of mysteries. Life, in any form and degree, is so; how much more life in its highest manifestations! It is the life of the soul of which we here treat; and what can the true and proper life of the soul be—of such a soul as man's—a soul formed originally after the divine image—a soul of vast capacities and endless duration? I answer, it is God alone—the only living and true

God—God himself, communicating to me, as can be communicated to a finite being, his own blessed and immortal life. I must be brought, some how or other, into union and communion with him, the fountain of life. I must be restored to his image, and favour, and fellowship. I must be "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created me." No truth, simply as truth—no system, simply as a system—no ordinance, simply as an ordinance, can be the life of my soul, in the highest sense. All these, of themselves, leave the soul empty, barren, lifeless as before. These may be inferior channels of life, but they are not themselves *the* life. It is not in them; and what they have not, they cannot communicate. I must look for life where life resides in all its fulness. The soul's death is separation from God; the soul's life is restoration to God. In him, both in a natural and spiritual sense, "we live, and move, and have our being." The realisation of this great truth is the first awakening of life in the soul; and as life increases, the soul is cleaving faster and faster to the living and life-giving Jehovah, the I AM that I AM —a name, this, expressive of this great truth, that he only has life in and of himself. The scheme of redemption is based on this. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son

to have life in himself." The whole power of Christianity to vitalise the soul lies in the existence of the personal element—in the actual presence and power of a personal God, and a personal Saviour, put forth upon the individual soul. And forasmuch as knowledge, like faith, is the bond of union and communion between the soul and God, *on the part of man*, we see at once the nature of the connection between eternal life and the knowledge of him. It is not so much that the life flows from the knowledge as a distinct thing. The life and the knowledge, as matters of experience, are all one. The rise of life in the soul is identified with the rise of knowledge; and ever after, the progress of the one is proportionally as the progress of the other. It is the same thing viewed from different sides. From the side of God it is life, because life is his gift. From the side of man it is knowledge, because this is his act or exercise of mind. The whole power of Christianity, we repeat, to vitalise the soul, lies in the existence of the personal element. For look again at the text:—"This is life eternal, that they might know *Thee;*" not the truth merely, not the gospel, but Thee. And this throws light upon the nature of the knowledge here spoken of—the nature of that intellectual element which we have shown to be an essen-

tial ingredient in personal Christianity. You will observe that eternal life is connected with the knowledge, the simple knowledge, of God and Christ. Now, are we not at first rather stumbled at this? We say, how can this be? Do we not find persons possessed of the knowledge of Christianity, who have no spiritual life in their souls? And how do we meet this apparent contradiction between Scripture and actual experience? We say, their knowledge cannot be of the right kind; it is not saving knowledge, it is not spiritual knowledge, and so on. And therefore, with the view of correcting the text of Scripture, and preventing the abuse of it, we read it thus:—This is life eternal, that they might savingly, spiritually know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. But there are no such words as *savingly* and *spiritually* in the original, and surely if they had been necessary they would have been introduced. Our Saviour's words are simply, *that they might know*. Would it not be better, therefore, instead of almost always directing people's minds to the act itself of knowing, to direct them more frequently rather to the object—the Person to be known? This would determine the nature of the knowledge required, as well as call it into exercise. Scripture does not define, at least in any formal way, either faith or knowledge;

and the explanation is this—it sets before us the proper objects of faith and knowledge, and trusts to their making, when realised, the right impression upon the mind. It does not tell you how to believe, or how to know. How could it? It could use no definition that would not leave the matter as great a mystery as before. Besides, this would have been drawing away our regards from the truth itself to the operations of our own minds. What, then, is the explanation of our now-a-days deeming it necessary to guard those simple words, faith and knowledge, from abuse, by qualifying them, and making additions to them? It is this: We have too much lost sight of their proper objects. We have overlooked too much the personal element. We have dealt too exclusively with abstract doctrines, which in their own nature cannot give birth to anything but purely abstract and dialectical states of mind; and so we need to draw distinctions, and to speak of saving and speculative faith, saving and speculative knowledge—distinctions which are quite unintelligible to those for whom they are designed, just because the spiritual character of those acts presupposes the spiritual character of their objects. It is life eternal to know THEE. Ah! there lies the secret of that knowledge which is eternal life. I must either

know Him, or not know Him. There is no middle state of mind. If I have not the knowledge which is eternal life, it is not the true God and the true Christ that I have been contemplating, but a figment of my own imagination—an unsubstantial conception of my own mind. True, the knowledge of a divine and spiritual being must needs be a spiritual knowledge, the result of a spiritual influence upon the mind. But here, as in every other department, the nature of the knowledge depends primarily on the nature of the thing known; and we do think that by far the most effectual way of dealing with the unrenewed is, instead of telling them that they do not know aright and believe aright, to assure them that they do not believe and know the God and the Saviour of the Bible at all.

Fourthly, *The theistic or God element*—"The only true God." Christianity is a life. It is a beautiful view this, and correct as it is beautiful. It is truly a most profound view, going right to the heart of it, and bringing to light its hidden nature. It is a most comprehensive view, taking in with one sweep its highest and most far-reaching results. Christianity is a life—the very life of God in the soul of man; bringing God and man together again in sympathy and fellowship, unit-

ing them again in righteousness and true holiness, which is the life that God leads—the very breath of the Divine existence. Christianity is not so much an end itself as a means to an end, and this is the end —the re-enthroning of God in the heart of man, so that it shall not be so much I that live, but God that lives in me—every pulse of my new life throbbing in unison with God's—my heart beating responsive to his heart—my understanding the faint reflection of his understanding—my will the echo of his will; this is a grand and elevating view of Christianity, and we cannot help thinking, that if there is too little of Christ in the Christianity of some, there is *too little of God in the Christianity of others.* True; Christ is God. But we speak now of the Godhead generally, with a more special reference to the Godhead of the Father. Have you never marked how much Christ speaks of his Father? He is the Father's servant; he sought not his own glory, but the glory of the Father; he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father. His mission was to bring men back to God, in subjection to his authority, in resemblance to his image, in the enjoyment of his favour now, and of his presence hereafter. His object was not to come between us and God—to hide him from our view as a veil, or defend us from him as a shield. He

is the Mediator between God and man; he heals the breach; he brings the parties again into an amicable relation. We are accustomed to say that the person of Christ is the ultimate and terminating object of faith; and this is true so far. He is so as in contrast with other Saviours, or with the truth, which does nothing more, and can do nothing more, than exhibit him. But not as in contrast with the other Persons; for the ultimate and terminating object of faith, as well as of all other religious homage, is the Divine Nature—the whole Godhead, especially the First Person, as in a sense representing the others. Mark this passage, in 1 Pet. i. 21, "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God," —*By him*, that is, by Christ, through a medium—*in God* ultimately, as a final end. Now, is not all this a good deal lost sight of in our popular Christianity? Is there not a tendency to leave God out of it? is there not an extreme type of evangelism, which regards Christianity as a scheme for effecting men's salvation merely? Salvation! this is the one idea of this Christianity. But salvation—as commonly understood, at least—expresses only the negative side of Christianity, which is far more than deliverance from certain

dreaded evils. The positive side of Christianity is, that it is a life,—that it exhibits the glory of the Divine character, and vindicates the honour of the Divine government,—that it writes anew the law of God in the heart of man,—that it makes the rebel a willing subject of the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible,"—that, in short, it makes God all in all. But the exaggerated form of evangelism to which we refer, makes little or nothing of the theistic element: man's salvation is everything; God's supremacy, nothing. It is a purely selfish Christianity this. It dishonours Christ. Under the idea of exalting him, by making him the Alpha and Omega—the first, middle, and end—it really dishonours him, by counteracting the grand end of his mission. It dishonours God, for it displaces him from his own position as the supreme object of worship and the moral governor of the universe. And such a Christianity, being deprived of the theistic element, is deprived of its ethical character. Such themes as the divine being and perfections, the moral law, the judgment to come, divine providence, the claims of humanity, and many other kindred topics, all bearing upon the character of God, form a part of Christianity, as well as those points which bear directly upon the individual's own safety and peace. A Chris-

tianity without Christ, without his grace and righteousness, is not the Christianity of the New Testament: as little is a Christianity without God, without his law, and his supremacy. You love to hear of Christ and his free salvation; this *is* the Gospel, you say. But you do not love to hear much of God, of his sovereign authority, of his infinite majesty, and other attributes? This you stigmatize as legalism—as mere natural religion, forsooth! You love to hear of Jesus Christ, but not of the true God that sent him—of the sent, but not of the sender—of the ambassador, but not of the king—of the gift, but not of the giver. Surely there is something very far wrong here, grievously wrong, dangerously wrong. It is making Christ the minister of sin; it is virtual Antinomianism. Let us be assured that a Christianity which thus makes light of God is as unscriptural as that which makes light of Christ.

Fifthly, *The evangelic or Christ element*—"Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Christianity is a life. It is a charming idea, and we delight to recur to it. Nor do we know a better antidote to the dead formalism that usurps the sacred name of Christianity than this. It is a life—but it is a restored life; and this brings before us a peculiarity,

a difficulty, which has not before this crossed our path. That God could, by a *mere act of power*, restore life to a soul spiritually dead—as he did at first impart life to man—cannot be doubted. But could he do so in consistency with his other perfections? The communication of life is one thing, the restoration of forfeited life another. There were hindrances in the way of the second—there were none in the way of the first. The theistic element cannot meet this problem and solve it. The evangelic element alone can do this—*Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* This meets the difficulty. Eternal life is obtained, and flows to us through a new channel. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."—(1 John v. 11.) THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. The record tells me there is life to be had; it tells me, too, where it is; it points me to Christ; it says to me, "Behold the only source and fountain of life for sinners!" The record tells me this; and then it leaves me. And what next? I must now deal personally with this living and life-giving Saviour. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."—(1 John

v. 20.) Mark here the various steps in this quickening of the soul. The Son of God has come: this is the foundation of the whole. He has come, and has merited eternal life for all that "the Father hath given him." Next, he gives the understanding by which I can know him. Then, as the result of that knowledge, I am united to him, and become part of his mystical body, and *live in him.* "The life that I *now* live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."

It is, beyond doubt, this element—the Christ element—that constitutes the one grand peculiarity of Christianity—from which, indeed, it takes its very name. Leave out this, and you rob it of all power and vitality: it becomes weak as any other system. It is shorn of its strength. To this element evangelism gives full prominence—not keeping it in the background—not bringing it forward stealthily and timidly, but boldly and broadly. Here lies the mighty power of evangelism for awakening and maintaining spiritual life in all periods of the church. It honours Christ by setting him forth in the very forefront of its teachings; and he bears testimony to it, by accompanying it with the demonstration of his own Spirit. Here, too, lies the hold which evangelism has of the affections and the support of all real Christians, of whatever name. It is the

common bond of union—the common centre of attraction—the common nourishment of their souls. And why? Because its one grand, inspiring theme is Christ. He is all in all. His deity—his atonement—his grace—his glory;—this is the pervading spirit of it. Christ! Ah! there is a power in that name to touch all hearts; to warm, and delight, and revive the souls of all who have been "born from above." It is this element that imparts life to the ministrations of the pulpit—life to the services of the sanctuary—life to those schemes of Christian enterprise and philanthropy by which our age is distinguished—life, in short, to the individual soul, and to the church at large.

An exposition of the whole doctrine of eternal life has not been attempted here. Only those aspects of it have been set forth which seem to arise most naturally out of the passage, and are calculated to meet certain errors. This has imparted to the subject somewhat of a psychological character. It will easily be seen, however, that the strictly objective elements which belong to it are not only not denied, but are taken for granted as underlying the whole structure. There is one topic, however, on which more might have been said—the *duration*, namely, of the life of which Christianity is the channel. As to the real meaning of the word

"eternal," no doubt can possibly exist in any simple mind. All that has lately been written upon it, with the view of qualifying it and explaining it away, is pure trifling. That the life is eternal, in the ordinary sense of the term, is plain enough; but the reason of its being eternal is a deep and momentous question. Why is this life eternal? Not because it *is* life. There is nothing in life of any kind, simply as life, to ensure its perpetuity. Nor is there anything in knowledge, simply as knowledge, to constitute this life *eternal*. So long, indeed, as the knowledge exists, there is of course life, but this is nothing better than a mere truism. It is here that a purely subjective or psychological theory of life fails: *it makes no provision for the continuance of this life beyond the present moment.* Eternity must therefore be something superadded to life *of mere goodness*. "Eternal life," says Scripture, "is the gift of God;" and, in the verse immediately preceding the text, we read, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should *give* eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." That eternal life which was set before Adam as a reward, is set before us as a gift. It becomes a real, present, personal possession. The believer can now say—Eternal life is mine; that is, the life I now have shall never fail me; it is

secured by my union with Christ, and as the reward of His obedience. This element of eternity is a most precious attribute attached to the spiritual life, and is felt to be so by the Christian. He feels that he has even now entered on the possession of an inheritance lasting as the Divine existence.

And now, in conclusion, let me ask, Is not Christianity a truly grand system? Let us try to entertain right views of it. Let us enlarge our minds to grasp it, and take it all in. Let us study breadth. Let us beware of investing a theme like this with the narrowness of our own hearts, and the littleness of our own conceptions. Christianity has nothing to fear if we will only do it justice—if we will only exhibit it in its true character—if we will only give it free scope and development. It is a grievous thing that this heaven-born religion should suffer in passing through our hands by being compelled to assume some dwarfish shape, in which its divine origin can scarcely be discerned. The age demands another Christianity than this. It is an earnest age, and demands an earnest Christianity—even a Christianity that has life and power in it—a vital, dynamical Christianity, that will take its place among the various forces that are at play in society, and will influence and sub-

ordinate them all. The age is an intellectual one, and demands a Christianity that will furnish food for the mind, and will not only not be beneath, but on a level with, and even above the current literature and science of the day—a Christianity that will satisfy the intellect with its truths, and touch the heart with its love, and sway the will with its persuasiveness, and gratify the taste with its beauties, and fill the imagination with its sublimities—a Christianity that will enlist the whole nature of man on its side, and command its willing and devoted homage—a Christianity so broad and catholic, and yet so pure and scriptural, as will unite the scattered members of Christ's mystical body—a Christianity that, investing men's minds and hearts with its own greatness, will raise them above paltry ends and aims, and paltry disputes and distinctions—a Christianity which, drawn fresh from the fountainhead, the springs of life that never die, shall appear in all the vigour of immortal youth, with unabated strength, undimmed eye, and unwrinkled brow—a Christianity which, bearing the full impress of its Author's image, shall carry its own credentials along with it—a Christianity which, armed with weapons of ethereal temper, clothed with the panoply of heaven, charged with all the elements of truth and righteousness, of

beauty and grandeur, of love and of power, full of God and full of Christ, shall be adored by all who love it, and be dreaded by those who love it not.

And we need no new or improved Christianity. It is all here—in the Bible—this blessed book—God's own Word—the light of the world—the Church's pillar of fire—the healer of the nations—the voice of the Eternal—the purchase of Christ's blood—the sword of the Spirit—the instrument of regeneration—the food of the renewed soul—the "more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise,"—until He come who is the eternal, incarnate, consubstantial Word of God; and then, farewell, blessed book! we need thy light no more.

Meanwhile, let it circulate on the wings of every wind that blows! Spread, O spread it, over the wide earth! Sow, with no stinted hand, this precious seed! "Broadcast it o'er the land!" Let it find its way into every peasant's hut and every royal palace, into every hall of science and every court of legislation! Let this lower sun, emblem of the Sun of righteousness, rise on every nation with healing under its wings! Let China's teeming millions read its sacred page! Let India's dark idolaters learn from it the knowledge of the

true God; and the deluded followers of the Antichrist of the East find that there is another Prophet sent from heaven than their own! Let it find access into the darkest seats of the Papacy, and overthrow the Antichrist of the West! Angel of Mercy! swift be thy flight over earth and sea—irresistible thy progress—universal thy triumph!

II.

CHRISTIANITY A WORK.

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."—JOHN xvii. 4.
Read in connexion John iv. 34; v. 17; ix. 4.

CHRISTIANITY is a life! this was our first theme. Christianity is a work! this is our second theme. It follows naturally and necessarily from the former: for if Christianity be a vital system, it must also be a dynamical system; if it be a life, it must also be a work—a force—an energy. Life is something essentially active; at any rate, its tendencies are ever towards activity. If life and its exercises can be at all distinguished, it is only as far as the first presupposes a *principle* of action, and the latter imply a *sphere* of action. Given the life, or principle of action, to find a sphere for that principle, and to stir it up, and direct and control it—this is the great problem of practical ethics. There are two great problems,

in fact, in morals, and the gospel solves both. There is, first, the problem of life itself—how it shall be awakened and maintained in the soul. We have already called attention to the solution of this problem. Then there is the problem of life in action—how it shall be drawn forth, and made to pass from principle to practice, and thus turned to the best account both for its own sake and that of Him who has imparted it: *for its own sake*, for life thrives best—it is then in its most normal, healthy condition—when it is acting according to its own impulsive, energetic nature; and *for the sake of Him who has imparted it*, for it is thus He is glorified, by its furthering the ends, the high ends for which it was conferred. It is to the solution of this problem that we now propose to address ourselves. And first of all, with the view of proving how thoroughly Christianity is a work, we would refer to *the exhibition of it in the life of its great author—Christ himself.*

Now it is very interesting to notice here (as throwing light upon this point) the connexion between the passage before us and the previous verse. It is declared to be life eternal to know Jesus Christ—that is, through the knowledge of him we become partakers of his life. And what was this life of his? Was it that of the mystic—a dreamy,

contemplative, apathetic life? Was it an inner life merely—a life spent in seclusion, in isolation, in self-tormenting, self-scrutinising exercises? Or was it a life of luxury and inglorious ease? Mark what follows, and mark it well, for it is very remarkable, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Ah! this was the life of Jesus Christ, whom the true God sent into this world of ours. It was an active, devoted, self-sacrificing life he led. See how closely the vital and the dynamical,—the life and the work were united in him;—they were all one. To know Christ aright, is to know him in this character, as the glorifier of God—the Father's servant and workman. And the life that comes through such a knowledge must needs be a life like his; a life which consecrates all its energies and all its opportunities to the divine glory; a busy, working life, at the close of which his language, too, may be taken up, though in an immeasurably inferior degree—"I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." These are indeed remarkable words. There is a depth and fulness of meaning in them which reveals itself only after a very close examination of them. Every clause, almost every word is emphatic. *I have glorified*

thee. What is chiefly noticeable here, at least in connexion with the topic in hand, is THE GRAND AIM AND END OF the Saviour's work—the glory of his heavenly Father. It was not his own glory, for that would have been selfishness; nor was it merely the good of others, for that would have been nothing better or higher than philanthropy; but it was the divine glory! The object of his mission into the world was to vindicate and illustrate the glory of the divine character and government which had been dishonoured by man. This he did by his own voluntary subjection to the Father—by his obedience, as we say, and his death. He glorified his *justice*, for its claims were fully met by him and satisfied. He glorified his *truth*, for its threatenings were realised in him to the letter. He glorified his *mercy*, for it found free scope through his interposition, and could now reach the guiltiest of the guilty. He glorified, in a word, HIS WHOLE CHARACTER. All the value of Christ's work, whether viewed as an atonement, or as an example, lay here—in its being done with a view to the divine glory. We do not see into the depths of this "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," if we overlook this. We shall not be able to sympathise with the mission of the Son of God into our world unless we lay hold on this great

fundamental principle, that the divine glory underlies, originates, pervades, and terminates the whole of the divine procedure, and that the rule "whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," is the grand law of the moral universe, the violation of which spreads ruin and disorder wherever that violation has occurred. It was to illustrate and enforce this principle—it was to write anew this law in hearts from which it had been erased—it was to destroy the pride and selfishness of man—it was to re-enthrone God in the soul, and make his glory the supreme and ruling motive in every breast—it was for this purpose Jesus lived and died. This is redemption—this is salvation in the full sense of these glorious words. And it is a great achievement wherever it has been accomplished; it is a mighty and most blessed change in him who is the subject of it. To do all—to do anything to the glory of God! Ah! that is what fallen humanity cannot rise to; it cannot even credit the possibility of it. It is easy to work—to labour much and sacrifice much for inferior ends; but to work for God—to lose sight of self—to be swallowed up in the divine glory! this is another matter altogether. And here lies the value of the life of Christ—that it shews that this can be done, and has been done, and in our nature too; and that it shews, also, *how* it can

be done, not in our own strength, but by vital union with Him in whom spiritual life resides in all its fulness. It is a grand thing thus to work for God —thus to live for the divine glory! Oh! believe it, we shall never be happy till this is the aim and end of all we do: "I have glorified thee"—

On the earth, he adds. What is noticeable here is the SPHERE of the Saviour's work—this world. This is not an incidental or meaningless expression. There is a deep truth contained in it. It was on this earth the divine glory was set at nought, and trampled under foot; it was on this earth the divine glory received its brightest manifestation and its highest vindication. Who does not see a marvellous wisdom in this? The enemy is met and vanquished in his own chosen field. The great Captain of our salvation descends from his own bright abode into the arena of this lower world, and there, or rather here, in the view of God, and angels, and devils, and men, "He lays his glory by," he "takes upon him the form of a servant, and becomes obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that the dishonour done to his Father might be wiped away. And now he can say, I have glorified Thee *on the earth*, this rebellious, apostate province of thy vast empire, let me back again to the glory I had with thee before

I left thy bosom. Who does not see, we repeat, a marvellous wisdom in the choice of this earth as the sphere of the Saviour's God-glorifying work? You can at least imagine other spheres, but not one so suitable as this. And the same wisdom is manifest in continuing this earth as the sphere of labour for his disciples. Why are they not removed, immediately after conversion, to a brighter and better world on which their hearts are placed, but because here, on the earth, they have opportunities for glorifying their heavenly Father, such as even heaven itself could not afford? No sphere like this world—this dark, disordered, wretched world—for witnessing, at any hazard, for God's supremacy; for glorifying him by doing and suffering; for wiping away tears and healing broken hearts; for alleviating the afflictions of sorrowing humanity; for saving souls from destruction, and winning them over to the service of Jehovah. Yes; it is a noble field of usefulness we are permitted to occupy; and though there are times when we grow weary of it, and would fain be away from it altogether, yet, in our calmer moments, we feel that this is wrong, and that in reality we are losing sight of the grand end of our being, and are preferring our own ease to the glory of God. Each one has his own *special* sphere in this world—

his own divinely allotted sphere, within which it is his duty to work, and to glorify God by this his work. Whatever that special sphere be, let us occupy it well. Let us not shrink from its difficulties and duties. Let us come forth boldly on the side of God, and confront the enemies of the gospel, and stem the torrent of iniquity, and uphold the cause of righteousness, and be "valiant for the truth upon the earth." Look abroad upon the face of the world; how it still "lieth in the wicked one!" how the earth still groans under an ever-accumulating load of sin and misery! And yet this world is not the Devil's, but God's. "The earth is the Lord's," and he will yet make good his claim to it. From the moment the Saviour could say, I have glorified thee upon the earth, the knell of the reign of the usurping prince of this world was rung. Let us not, therefore, abandon this earth as utterly accursed and cast off by God. Let us not give over the world as lost. It is a blood-bought world, and He who ransomed it at so dear a price will one day wear it as the most radiant gem in his many-jewelled diadem. The earth that was bedewed with the Saviour's tears and sweat,—the earth that was trodden by his hallowed feet,—the earth that drank his life-blood, shall yet throw off the curse that has so long

blighted it, and shine forth with the divine glory. Ah! there is a prophetic import wrapped up in that expression, *on the earth.* It is instinct with a bright and glorious future; it is pregnant with hope and joy for our world; it is anticipatory of the deliverance of nature from the bondage of corruption under which it has groaned and travailed in pain until now. "I have glorified thee on the earth!"—

I have finished the work, continues he. What is noticeable here is the PERFECTION of the Saviour's work. Mark this word "finished;" it intimates not merely that the work was done, but that it was well done, that it was in every respect a perfect work; perfect in respect of the nature of it, as something altogether peculiar in itself, and to be distinguished from every other work as to the ends it would accomplish; perfect, in respect of the spirit of it, as aiming at the glory of God; and perfect in respect of the amount of it, as coming fully up to what was prescribed. It was such a work, so finished, so perfect, that he could challenge the divine approbation upon it, and claim the stipulated reward. And it was such a work that the Father did declare his acceptance of it, and did crown it with the promised recompense. And notice—for this is a very interesting feature of

this work—within how comparatively brief a period it was accomplished; within how comparatively humble a sphere of life; and with how comparatively little obtrusiveness and outward show. Why was a work like his, so vast in itself, and so momentous in its consequences, at once so speedily and so perfectly performed? It was because he entered into it with his whole heart; because he threw himself soul and body into it; because he embarked all his energies in it; because there was no other work to divide his affection and weaken his interest. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." He did not perform his assigned work in a cold, heartless, perfunctory manner. His work was his delight, his refreshment, his food, his very life. This is the explanation of his finishing his work so thoroughly and so promptly, and it lets us into the secret of doing much for God. Why is so little work done by us, and that little so ill done, so imperfect in every respect? We complain of want of time, want of opportunity, want of strength. It is an utter delusion, and our own hearts condemn us. It is zeal that is lacking, zeal for the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the salvation of souls. We shall never be able to do great things for God, unless we embark in his service with an ardour that the world will stigma-

tize as enthusiasm or something worse. It is truly amazing what one will do, how much work he will accomplish, and that too within the compass of a brief earthly existence, who is inspired with the zeal of the Lord's servant, and spends and is spent in his service. And have we not here the explanation of what has been regarded as one of the deepest and darkest mysteries of providence, and has been bewailed as one of the heaviest calamities that can befal the church and the world, the early—too early, we call it—removal of zealous labourers from the sphere of their earthly labours. They were more devoted and diligent than others, their work was therefore all the sooner done, and they were the earlier called to their reward. Their work was finished; if it had not been finished they would not have been removed. Their work was finished, and they had no more to do. Their work was finished, for they were no idlers; their work was no child's play; they worked hard, they did not spare themselves, and they got through it all the sooner, and all the better. Their work was finished, and a goodly structure it was when the top stone was laid upon it,—a noble specimen of their industry and perseverance,—an enduring monument in which their memory is preserved and kept sweet, when the hands that raised it are mouldering

in the dust! Those who gaze upon it are struck with wonder and admiration. So much work accomplished within a few short years by one man! What might not be done by all of us were we as single-minded, as large-hearted, as high-souled, as self-denying, as indefatigable as he! We are reminded of our own work which is accumulating upon our hands, of our opportunities of usefulness which are irrecoverably gone, of our time, and strength, and talents, which have been wasted in trifles, or have been allowed to lie by unemployed and to gather rust. It grieves and humbles us beyond measure to think how deceitfully, how wretchedly we have done the Lord's work,—a work that demanded our best energies,—a work that claimed the precedence of every other,—a work that would have had such glorious results! On the contrary, there is an unspeakable satisfaction in feeling that one has done what he could, that at least he has not come wilfully and habitually short of any duty, that the work has not been utterly marred in his hands. And especially when the close of life is at hand, and the Judge is at the door (and oh! call not this *legalism*, it is not so), it will contribute greatly to brighten our hope of heaven, to feel that we have not lived for ourselves, but for God, and can thus venture to use, to some

extent, the Saviour's own words in the view of his departure out of this world, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work"—

"*Which thou gavest me to do*," he finally adds. What is chiefly noticeable here is the SUBMISSIVENESS of the Saviour's work. It was a prescribed work,—a work given him to do. He did not mark it out for himself; he did not enter on it unbidden; he waited for a call, and when it came he joyfully responded to it, "Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God." Such a work as his, indeed, could not have been chosen for its own sake. There was much both in the sphere and in the work itself that would have led him to shrink from it. But higher considerations reconciled him to it. Subjection to the authority of him who prescribed it, regard for his glory, love for the objects of the divine compassion,—these endeared to him the work, both of doing and suffering, laid upon him. It was, we repeat, a prescribed work, and this feeling, never once lost sight of, kept him steadfast in the path of duty. "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is called day." "The cup which my heavenly Father has given me, shall I not drink it." There was a beautiful submission in all this which immeasurably enhanced the value of the work itself, and, in fact, imparted to it its chief value in the

sight of God. For He prescribes work of any kind, not so much because it is needful to him as because it is a test of obedience on the part of him to whom it is prescribed. There is a deep truth here, and it enters so essentially into the whole theory of *working*, that we must endeavour to open it up and apply it. It is essential to all acceptable obedience, that it be not self-devised, and self-originated, but that it be in conformity with the will of God. It is not every kind of work that will please him, either as to the matter or manner of it, either as to its substance or its spirit. Will-work, like will-worship, is his dislike. He will say of it, Who hath required this at your hand. And it is just as true now as it was then, in the case of the Lord's servant by way of eminence, that God presents to his servants both the sphere of their labour, and their very labour itself. *The work which thou gavest me to do.* Ah! here lies our *authority* to work for God; he has assigned us our task, if we may call that a task which is a pleasure, a privilege; and we need no other warrant than the plain intimation of his own providence, pointing out to us some path of duty, shutting us up to it, in fact, so that we cannot avoid seeing it, and cannot escape from it without great stupidity or great guilt. Here lies our *encouragement* to work

for God; he has sent the work, and he will send the strength to perform it, and in due time will crown it with success, for it is his own work, and he will bless it. Here lies our *obligation* to work for God; he has placed us in our present sphere of duty, and we dare not quit it. It may be one of great responsibility, great difficulty, great danger, and we may fancy that we are quite unfit for it, and may sigh for another sphere, but it is the very sphere God has chosen for us. We did not force ourselves into it, we found ourselves in it by an over-ruling hand. He chose it for us, who chooses everything for his people, their duties, their trials, their position, their relationships; and God having thus given us a work to do, we will by God's grace do it. No fear of man, no love of ease, no allurements of sense, shall turn us aside from it. Oh! it imparts a heroism, a dignity, a moral sublimity to one's conduct, be his sphere what it may, however exalted, however humble, when he feels that he is acting his part on the theatre of life as one that has a mission from heaven, one that has a work to do, and that not man's work, which is ever a poor, contemptible, thankless work, but God's work, which is ever a glorious, a delightful work. We have all this high calling, this heavenly mission, this divine work, if we but knew it.

Yes, if we but knew it; but how few of us do know this,—are capable of rising to the elevation of such a sentiment. Only hear what Christ says on this point, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Amazing truth! *our* mission, *our* work, the same substantially, though, of course, with much important difference, as will at once occur to the minds of those who have correct conceptions of his atoning and saving character, yet the same substantially as to its ultimate ends and issues as his—the glorifying of the Father! It is an elevating, inspiring thought this. It lifts the mind immeasurably above the meaner aims and ends of the world. It invests life with an importance and a dignity it would not otherwise possess. Without this, life is but a poor thing—a passing vapour—a bubble upon the stream of time. But here is an object worth living for. The glory of God! The soul kindles at that thought; it is the awakening of a new existence—the bursting forth of new energies—the entrance upon a new arena, where a great conflict is going on that arrests the gaze of innumerable spectators. How changed now is life! We live the life of angels—the life of heaven even upon earth. How changed, too, is the world! We tread the earth—as the Christ of God trod it—the anointed of

Heaven, the living witnesses for Jehovah, the assertors of his supremacy, the propagators of his truth, the subjects of his spiritual kingdom!

Such, then, was the life of Christ, summed up in these remarkable words, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Such was Christ, and such must Christianity be; for where shall we find the most perfect embodiment and exemplification of Christianity if not in its divine author? In him Christianity is seen to be not a life merely, but a work—a thoroughly practical system.

But with the view of further proving how thoroughly Christianity is a work, we would call attention *to the system itself.* With this view we may look at Christianity under three aspects; as a system of divine influence, as a system of motives, and as a system of duties. First of all, then, do we view it as a *system of divine influence*—that is to say, a system in connexion with which the Spirit of God is bestowed to quicken and energise the spiritually dead soul, we see how truly it may be entitled a work. It is a great mistake to suppose that the sinner is passive throughout the whole work of his moral renovation. There is no power, it is true, in the soul to turn to God till supernatural grace is communicated. But then no sooner

is this the case than the soul awakens from the deep sleep of nature, and begins to put forth after salvation efforts unknown before. The soul thus quickened and energised by the Holy Spirit is active, essentially and powerfully active in repentance, in faith, in prayer, in resisting temptation, in conflicting with indwelling sin, in receiving the truth, and in using all these means, by which the soul's perfect renovation is achieved. So far, then, is the doctrine of divine influence from paralysing the Christian, that it is the source, and the only source, of all moral ability and inclination for what is truly good and spiritual. He works because God works in him and by him. He works out his salvation with fear, for it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do. Deprive Christianity of this divine influence, and it becomes weak as any other system; it is not, in any practical sense at least, either a life or a work. If, therefore, our Christianity has lulled us asleep—if it has not stirred us up to lay hold on Christ, and to aim after conformity to the divine image, it is a dead, formal, abstract Christianity, and not the spiritual Christianity of the Bible. It has come to us in word only, and not in power; we have but the letter which killeth, and not the spirit which maketh alive.

Or, secondly, do we view it as a *system of motives*, that is to say, a system in connexion with which arguments and considerations are held forth, and are addressed to the heart and to the will, suited in their own nature to rouse to action, we see how truly it may be called a work. The love of God, the grace of the Redeemer, the hope of heaven;—these are motives of the highest and most powerful character, and it is impossible to realize these, and not feel our whole soul won over to the divine service. "The love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." "Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." All this is in beautiful conformity with the constitution of the mind; and here lies the important difference between the law and the gospel. Both demand work. But the first makes no provision for its demand being complied with. It is like the Egyptian taskmasters of old, who required the Israelites to make bricks without straw. But the gospel does what the law cannot do—imparts to us both strength

and inclination for work—destroys the power of sin in our hearts, and enthrones God in its stead.

> "Talk they of morals! O thou bleeding Love!
> The grand morality is love of Thee."

This sentiment is as scriptural as it is beautiful, and as philosophical as it is scriptural. Faith working by love is the grand principle of gospel morality; faith realizing the love of God in our redemption, and this love enkindling our love in return; and then finally this love constraining us, as by a sweet yet irresistible influence, to offer ourselves as living sacrifices upon the altar of the Redeemer. Christianity is thus a work because it touches all the springs of action in our varied nature, and when these are touched, the whole man is gained.

Or, thirdly, do we view it as *a system of duties*, that is to say, a system in connection with which there is room for human agency in furthering the divine purposes regarding the world's salvation, we see how truly it may be called a work. It is very startling and mysterious to find how much that cause for which the Son of God came into the world has been committed to the charge of us his professed followers. It could not have been otherwise, perhaps, without such a continued miracu-

lous interposition as would have interfered with other and higher ends. But that it is so is a solemn and awful truth, and involves in it an amount of responsibility which, it is not too much to say, not one of us has yet fully realised. Is it the truth—the actual, sober truth—that if God is to be glorified on the wide theatre of this world of ours; that if the gospel is to triumph universally; that if Satan's usurped dominions is to be overthrown; that if the gross darkness that covers the earth is to be dissipated;—all this must be done by Christians themselves. Is this true? and who can doubt it, then say if Christianity be not a work. Say if it do not lay upon every one who professes it a moral obligation to spare no pains, no labour, no sacrifice, for the achievement of this great work, the world's Christianisation. It is a mighty work indeed—a work in comparison with which every other work dwindles into insignificance. And yet Christianity proposes to achieve this, and Christianity would achieve it, did we use it aright. But somehow or other we have come to think that Christianity can propagate itself, or at any rate that we individually have little or nothing to do with it. And yet there is plenty of work for all of us—for every one of us. And what—it is asked in all faithful-

ness and seriousness — what are we doing for Christ? What are we doing to advance the glory of God? What are we doing to pluck as brands from the burning the souls that are perishing on every side of us?

We proclaim the great but much forgotten truth, Christianity is a work. Away with that selfish, sickly, sentimental Christianity which would confine us within the narrow circle of our individual wants, and hopes, and privileges; which would lead us to sit down at our ease, and Cain-like ask, Am I my brother's keeper? which would willingly take salvation from God, but give him back no recompense in devotedness and self-denial; which would suffer us to stand by with folded hands and leave the work to be done by others. Away with such an apathetic Christianity, and let us have an earnest, practical, man-loving, God-glorifying Christianity. We have had enough, and more than enough, of speculation—of dispute—of division. Let us have work. Work is the life of the church and the individual soul. Work is health, work is gladness, work is privilege, "work is worship."

Everything calls aloud for work. The necessities of the church call for it; for it is weak and languishing, and maintains with difficulty its own

existence. The necessities of the world call for it; for some great crisis is at hand, and the Lord is about to work some strange work on the earth. The reviving zeal and activity of the enemies of the truth call for it; for Satan never was so busy as he is at this hour.

The plain fact is, the time for inaction has gone by, and Christianity must arouse itself, and assume the aggressive, that it may not only hold its own, but gain the world as its prize.

And this were for the good of Christians themselves. If anything will heal the divisions of Christendom; if anything will make the divided church one; if anything will bring down the benign influences of the Spirit of God; if anything will take the minds of men off trifles and turn them to the great essentials of religion, it is this—it is working in the field of the wide, wide world, it is doing more for Christ, it is labouring more assiduously to raise fallen humanity from guilt and ignorance to the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

We repeat the question, What are you doing for God. Can it be that the past period of your existence has been spent in other work than His or has been dwindled away in strenuous idleness, without an aim, without an end worthy of an

immortal being. Awake, awake out of sleep; address yourselves to more noble employment. Begin henceforth to live for God. We cannot recal the past. It is dead and gone; and

"Let the dead past bury its dead."

The past is in its grave with all its sins and sorrows, all its means and opportunities of usefulness, all its duties and trials, all its anxieties and fears, all its wounded affections, its blighted hopes, its withered flowers. They are passed away, and no wish of ours can recal them. And as for the future, we dare not speculate upon that. Only our prayer would be, that it may be holier and happier than the past; that we may be more active and useful than before; and that our earthly existence being spent more for the divine glory, may terminate in the divine favour; that "whether we live, we may live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we may die unto the Lord; whether, therefore, we live or die, we may be the Lord's."

III.

CHRISTIANITY A REWARD.

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—JOHN xvii. 5.

CHRISTIANITY a life! this is the foundation. Christianity a work! this is the building. Christianity a reward! this is the top-stone. First, the life; then the work; then the reward; this is the proper order, and each naturally and necessarily suggests the other. The relation between them is very close, and at the same time very peculiar, for they are the same, and yet they are distinct. *They are the same;* for what is the work but the life in exercise, and what is the reward but the life and the work in advanced stages of development? *And yet they are distinct;* for the work will ever depend upon the amount of life, and the reward upon the amount of the work.

What, then, is the relation between these last two, between the reward and the work? Or, in other words, what room is there in Christianity for the

idea of recompense, or, as we say, the doctrine of rewards and punishments? This is a question that goes very deep into the heart of the evangelic system; nor would it be easy to name a subject that calls for more care and nicety in the handling of it than this. It is one of the difficulties of Scripture, and has proved, in one way or other, a stumbling block to many; here they have been caught tripping. In fact, it is a grand theological *crux*, a sure test, or touchstone of the soundness, or at all events, the clearness, of one's religious views, and reveals at once, to an acute observer, the school to which he belongs.

We begin by remarking, then, that there are four classes who have imperfect views on the subject before us—*the relation between the work and the reward.*

First, there is what may be termed the *extreme subjective view.* According to this the work and the reward are all one. Heaven and hell are *mere states of mind.* If thou art holy, heaven is in thine own heart. God is nigh thee, Christ is within thee; thou needest no other heaven. What more wouldst thou desire, or even conceive? If thou art not holy, "thou art in a wrong state, hell is about thee, God would save thee out of that state." That there is much truth

in this cannot be doubted. It is such as naturally presents itself to persons of a refined and spiritualistic turn of mind; and we must be permitted to say that they have done some good service in giving prominence to what is so much overlooked. And yet it is only part of the truth after all. It is an over-refinement, an excess of simplification, an extreme of spiritualism, which will not bear a minute scrutiny in the light of Scripture. There is in it an affectation—we are constrained to call it so—of something more pure and elevated than God's own word.

Then, in direct antagonism to this, and in an opposite extreme, there is, secondly, what we may term the *extreme objective view*. According to this, the work and the reward are *essentially different*. Heaven and hell are *mere places*. Pleasure and pain are the two leading ideas of which these are symbols. Heaven is but another name for happiness, hell for suffering; they partake largely of a materialistic, or sensuous character. There is much, too much, of the *physique* in this view, which shocks the higher order of minds, but which lays hold of and fascinates prodigiously minds of an inferior order.

Then, thirdly, there is *the legal view*. According to this, the *reward is placed above the work*, the lat-

ter being tolerated only for the sake of the former. Heaven and hell are *mere payments*, a *quid pro quo*, a certain amount of wage for a certain amount of work—hire in short. It is a strictly mercantile affair, a business transaction, a balancing of accounts, a weighing of actions, a question of merit or demerit. Justice is the presiding deity, and gives sentence with unerring and impartial hand. According to this view, Christianity is little else than a system of rewards and punishments; the gospel is, at best, a mitigated law.

And then, fourthly, there is an *ultra-evangelical view*, rare indeed, but sometimes met with. According to this, the *work is set above the reward*, the latter being, in fact, lost sight of altogether, the very word being suffered to drop out of use, or introduced, if introduced at all, with timidity, and with certain explanations and qualifications, as if reward did not mean reward, but something else. We protest against this most undue liberty with our Saxon tongue. It is an offence against philology as well as against theology. Those to whom we refer cannot abide to hear Christianity spoken of in any sense as a system of rewards and punishments. They think the expression savours of legalism, and so no doubt it does in the lips of many who use it. They are jealous, and right it

is they should be so, for the honour of free grace. *Their* heaven is a gift rather than a reward; not justice, but sovereign grace alone presides in the bestowment of it; it is the purchase of Christ, and no mention must be made of works, they are totally, for ever, excluded.

We have thus endeavoured to classify the various views which are held in reference to the relation between the work and the reward. Exceptions may, no doubt, be taken to our classification, as to classifications of all kinds, on the ground of their including too much or too little. But in the main, we expect it will be admitted to be correct.

Now let us see what Christianity—that is, scriptural, catholic, evangelical Christianity, which embraces all truth and rejects all error, which is drawing to itself, and will finally absorb all that is true in the systems of men, and will cast away all that is false;—let us see what a broad, full-orbed Christianity has to say on this subject, and how it rectifies, subordinates, and harmonizes the one-sided and partial views of men and of systems.

Looking, then, to the first, the extreme subjective view, or identification theory, as we may call it, let us see how Christianity can accept and appropriate the measure of truth that is in it.

They have hold of a great truth who tell us

that the work is its own reward, that it pays its own wages, and is not thinking, for the time being, of any further recompense; that there is in the work an immediate and inherent recompense or reward, inseparable from the very nature of the work itself, it being, in fact, the work under another aspect. The work, in short, carries the reward, or rather, to speak more exactly, *a* reward in its own bosom. It is a great truth this, nor do we know any truth that testifies more strongly to the benevolence of God, and speaks more touchingly to the heart of man in favour of religion. Now Christianity is a reward in this sense, because it alone imparts the inclination and the strength needed for the work, so that it becomes easy, natural, delightful. It is only in Christianity that the work and the reward are in any degree harmonised and bound up together. While I strive to obey the law in my natural state of guilt and alienation,—while I work in my own strength, and from inferior motives, the work, so far from being a reward, is a punishment. I work in chains. I labour as a bond-slave. Not till I love God himself, not till I believe in the love of Christ, not till I am forgiven, not, in a word, till I am a Christian, a renewed and saved man, do I find the reward in the work itself, and experience the truth of that

scripture, "Great peace have they that love thy law," and of this other, "In the keeping of His commandments there is a great reward." It is then I love the work for the work's sake, and His sake whose work it is. Many ingredients enter into my delight in the work, and go to constitute it a present recompense.

First of all, viewing it subjectively, there is in it the gratification of my own nature, with all its moral, intellectual, and emotional capacities. Is it a work of mercy? my benevolent feelings are furnished with a pure and rich repast. Is it a work of toil? my active powers find congenial and healthy exercise. Is it a work of suffering? my heroic energies are roused, and meet with a suitable field for displaying themselves. Is it a more purely spiritual work? my various graces of faith, hope, humility, are called into play, and are nourished and strengthened. It were easy to enlarge in this direction. The truth is, my nature is so constituted, that in proportion as it is called forth into exercise, there is the glow of health and gladness in my soul.

But this does not exhaust the reward that lies in the work itself: there is something higher and purer still. It were but a subtle species of selfishness did I not rise above my own states of mind,

did I not rise above the work to him whose authority prescribes it, whose love constrains it, whose glory terminates it. I am unworthy of the high honour of doing anything for God: he needs not my services, as I need his. Not only to work, but to feel that one is working for him—that he acknowledges the work—that he allows me in this way to shew my gratitude to him, and to get near to him (for when are we nearer to God, and God to us, than when we are working for him?) oh! this is reward so great, so high, so undeserved, that no words can adequately set it forth!

Thus, then, is Christianity a reward in this important sense, that it makes the work its own reward—that it transmutes duty into privilege, law into love, subjection into freedom—that it so harmonizes the will of man with the will of God—that it so captivates the heart to the obedience of Christ—that it so destroys the enmity of the carnal mind, and enthrones God in the affections—that it so alters the relation between sinful, rebellious man and his Divine Lawgiver, by bringing the two again into a friendly relation, that there is no longer any conflict with Jehovah, any desire to escape from his control. It is Christianity, the Gospel, the atonement realised by faith, that effects this marvellous change in our moral condi-

tion—nothing else will. And this lets us into the very heart and centre of this most holy and blessed religion of ours. This reveals to us, more perhaps than anything else, its true character as a system of grace and reconciliation—a system that brings immediate peace to the mind, and is even now an earnest of heaven—a system that does not reserve all its happiness for the future, but puts you in possession of *present* peace, *present* salvation, *present* fellowship with God!

Christianity a reward—an immediate, inward, conscious reward! This is a great and glorious truth. Let us not be satisfied unless we know it in our own experience.

Looking next to the second, or extreme objective view, let us see what there is here that Christianity can recognise as true.

They are right who tell us that there is a reward distinct from the work, and following after it—who speak of a heaven that has a local habitation as well as a name—who point to a judgment to come, and a trial by works, and a heaven following thereupon, and a recompense of glory, honour, and immortality, of fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore at God's right hand. All this is distinct from the work, and in addition to it. It will not do to explain all this away into mere subjective

blessings and mental states. It is an utter confusion of ideas to identify things that are so far at least different—how far we may see by and bye. It argues a thorough want of analytic power to confound what is immediate and inherent with what is subsequent and resultant. It is all very well to talk of the heaven *within*, but we must keep hold also of the heaven *without*. Spiritualism is a very fine thing, no doubt. We have too little of it in our religion generally; would we had more. But we are not purely spiritual and ethereal beings, and we cannot afford to dispense with all that is external and objective, now or hereafter. The heaven of the extreme subjective view is of too shadowy and impalpable a character to satisfy the intellect, or enkindle the imagination, or fill the heart. We want a real, *bona fide* heaven—a heaven that has definiteness and substance in it. We cannot love, we cannot even conceive of a heaven which is enveloped in mystery, from which all our conceptions of time and space are excluded, and which has nothing in common with our present cosmical existence. It is not thus Scripture speaks of it. True, we do not accept all its emblems in their most exact and literal meaning. But if there be any sense in Scripture at all—if the Bible be not a book of riddles—there is a real,

objective, local heaven, be it where it may. *They* speak of such a heaven with proud contempt—they are quite above it—they are a heaven to themselves, and need none other. It is a favourite opinion with them that their heaven is a grander thing than ours. And yet, after all, is there not a littleness, a narrowness, a selfishness about the doctrine of every man his own heaven, which stands in marked and unfavourable contrast with the warm, social, homefelt, heartfelt delights of our Father's house, where we shall dwell for ever in his presence, and serve him day and night in his temple. Here is something on which the mind can rest in contemplating the future. Oh! it is unspeakable relief to pass from the shadowy realms of idealism, where there is no rest for the sole of one's foot, to the sober, solid, substantial ground of God's revealed word and will. There is at first, and for a time, something quite fascinating, elevating, intoxicating even, in those excursions into the regions of dream-land, where visions "fair and sweet, yet misty all," float before the bewildered eye. Yet, sooner or later, one grows weary of "wandering in this enchanted ground, with giddy brow and tottering feet," and is fain to get back again to the realms of truth and reality—a humbler and more mundane sphere, it may be,

but one in which living forms of flesh and blood, such as we are, alone can breathe freely, and move and have our being. It is, in truth, a beautiful but baseless theory which, setting itself, as it does, at variance with the deepest necessities and desires of our nature, as well as with the plainest statements of Scripture, cannot long retain its hold of the mind.

For it is beyond all reasonable question that Christianity deals in grand objective realities; that it provides that there shall be not only a reward in the work, but a reward from the work. There is thus a twofold recompense provided, a double reward—the one accompanying, the other following. The work draws *after it* a reward both in time and eternity; *in time*, in the way of a fuller communication of grace to the soul; *in eternity*, in the way of a larger impartation of glory. But it is of prime importance to observe, that though the work and the reward are thus distinct, they are not different. There is a connexion between the two in point of suitableness. And this suitableness is twofold, as to the amount, or measure of the reward, and as to its kind, or nature. We see not, or at least very rarely, this suitableness in the dealings of man with man. The work and the wages are, for the most part, essentially different,

—bearing no relation to each other in any respect beyond conventional usage. It is but the money-value, as they call it, of the work that is looked to. But if my work be a spiritual one, you cannot adequately repay me with your temporal—your carnal things. Oh! there are services the value of which cannot be told down in gold or silver. There is another and a higher reward for work like this, and there are hearts that know what that reward is. The work is spiritual, and the recompense must be spiritual also. It is thus God rewards his faithful and obedient servants—"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in few things, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Work rewarded with work! This is the grand law of the Christian system, the evangelic scheme. The faithful labourer is advanced, yes advanced—it is a real advancement—to a higher position in the divine service. This the glory, this the honour to which he is raised—that he shall stand nearer the throne of God, and understand more of his character and ways—that he shall have a nobler and wider sphere of activity—that he shall rise higher and higher in the scale of existence—that there shall be evermore opening up to him new sources of enjoyment—that the various capacities

of his nature shall be continually expanding, and meeting with objects that can fill and satisfy them. It is in this sense, and in no inferior one, that Christianity is a reward, carrying the soul forward from one degree of glory to another; the work and the reward distinct and yet substantially the same,—the two acting and reacting on each other, and thus securing uninterrupted and unending progress. *For this law of suitable connexion will hold through eternity.* Were the connexion between the work and the reward arbitrary, as among men, it might be altered. But it is not so—it is a necessary one; it arises out of the fitness of things; it is in harmony at once with the righteousness and the beneficence of the divine character. The more we glorify God, the more will he glorify us; and how can he glorify us but just by raising us to a higher capacity of glorifying himself, for here lies at once the honour and the happiness of the creature. It is a grand idea this; let us cherish the thought of it, for there is a wonderful power in it to elevate and sanctify the mind.

Looking next to the third, the legal view, let us see what verdict Christianity pronounces upon it. May there not be some truth lurking here which it may be worth while to discover and place in its true light.

Legalists profess great reverence for the law; this is good, it is to be hoped their protestations are as sincere as they are loud and frequent. Be this as it may, we accept their professions as made in good faith. They point to those passages of Scripture which speak of judgment according to works; and unquestionably there are such passages —many such. This, too, is right. They make much of the justice of God, and maintain that when as Judge of all the earth he determines the final and everlasting destiny of every one, it is on strictly ethical principles; that rewards and punishments, that heaven and hell, are dispensed on the ground of individual moral character and conduct, and on this alone. This, too, is a great and fundamental truth, and not to be gainsaid. They assert that it is one of the deepest and most indestructible of the intuitions of our nature, that when we feel we have done right we are entitled to a recompense, to an acknowledgment at the hands of him to whom we have done it, and that when it is withheld we suffer wrong; and we honestly confess we think they are right here too.

All these seem to us portions of truth, and we should tremble to think of Christianity being found in antagonism with them. But it is not so, and they are no enlightened friends of it who would

endeavour to set the one against the other. Christianity accepts of these great everlasting verities, but supplements them with other portions of truth, without which no hope could be held out for guilty man. Yes, guilty man, for it is with such we have now to deal. You speak to me of the law! But I have transgressed it, and feel I am under its penalty. You speak to me of the justice of God! But I feel that it seals my condemnation. You speak to me of ethical principles, of moral character and conduct! But, alas! I am unable to do anything acceptable in God's sight; "in me there dwelleth no good thing." You speak to me of intuitions and inward promptings, and expectations! But these intuitions, these inward feelings, are all in favour of a just and fearful retribution. Your legalism cannot help me here. It is beautiful in theory, but it grievously fails in the application. Law! Justice! Judgment! Ah! these are terrible words. You do but cruelly mock me, pouring gall and wormwood into my wounds, when you mention them in mine ears. I see room for punishment under your system, but none at all for reward. This is a word that should form no part of your vocabulary, for it discloses the nakedness of the land, it betrays the weakness and deficiency of your theory. Reward! how is it to be

got at? In vain you call in something you term the general mercy of God to help you out of your difficulty. Mercy! mere mercy may forgive, may remove a penalty, but how can it reward? I am guilty, how can I, a guilty man, be rewarded? Solve that problem if you can; you cannot—confess honestly you cannot, and no longer profess more than you can accomplish.

But what legalism cannot do, evangelical Christianity can. The law! Christ's righteousness has magnified it and made it honourable. Justice! God is now just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Ethical principles! moral character! Divine grace renews the soul. The Spirit of God dwelling in the believer is the spring of personal holiness, of all those good and righteous actions on which a holy being can look with complacency. Only mark how things apparently irreconcilable, which have puzzled so many, may be harmonized. The work itself is of grace, grace enabling me to perform it; the reward is of very righteousness and truth following upon the intrinsic character of the work. It is no make-believe, but really and veritably a reward. I am rewarded, not for what another has done for me, but for what I have done myself, done no doubt through the might and power of another energising me, but still not the

less on that account done *myself;* nay, rather the more, for never am I more myself, never more truly free, never more fully possessed of a true and free personality, than when I am inhabited by the FREE SPIRIT of God. The reward is of grace, no doubt, for "by the grace of God I am what I am." But not the less does the judgment of Him who sits upon the great white throne on the great day of assize when all nations shall stand before him,—not the less does it rest on strictly ethical principles, not the less is it based on the ground of moral character as its real and proximate reason. Thus can we vindicate the ways of God to man.

Looking finally to the fourth or ultra-evangelical view, let us endeavour to mete to it the same even-handed justice we have done to the others.

It cannot, we think, be doubted that there is on the part of many holding evangelical sentiments, a jealousy of even the very term reward. Nor is this to be wondered at, or severely censured. A fear lest the freeness and simplicity of the gospel should be marred by the introduction of an element alien to its whole spirit, the element, namely, of merit; a difficulty in perceiving how the doctrine of reward can be made to fit in with the other parts of the system; a strong and natural recoil on the part of every humble Christian from aught

approaching to a claim upon God; a deep conviction and realization of the great imperfection and unworthiness that attaches to his best and holiest actions; to all which may be added, a reaction in the opposite direction from legalism, to which there is so vehement a tendency in the human heart;—all this will not only intelligibly account for, but will go far to redeem from blame the conduct of those to whom we refer.

But there is nothing like exhibiting the whole truth, and there is much, very much, of this particular portion of truth in the Bible, far more than one is aware of till he begins to examine into the subject. No good ever comes of concealment. Let us not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Why should we be afraid to exhort to good works by the hope of a reward in heaven? Is it lest the honour of free grace should be impaired? This betrays a want of confidence in the gospel. Is not the honour of grace sufficiently guarded when it is manifested in making us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and in bestowing upon us a reward immeasurably above what our works, even on the most favourable construction of them, deserve—even an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away! Is it lest men should be encouraged to act from an in-

ferior, selfish motive? But what if his condition in this world of temptation, and the constitution of his nature, render every variety and every degree of motive needful. Or is it lest the gospel should be misunderstood and perverted by the world? But what if it shall be the fact that not a few fine and earnest minds on this very account feel a want in our evangelism, inasmuch as it does not cover the whole territory of Scripture, nor satisfy the cravings of their own awakened spirits! This is a sore pity. For, after all, evangelical Christianity will alone satisfy the wants and desires of those whose souls have been in any good measure quickened into spiritual activity. It is the final goal or resting-place of all who have felt the wretchedness of sin, and the vanity of the world. Let us give them it in all its length and breadth. Let us shew them that "there is something in it for every man, and for all in every man," something to meet what is in each one's heart, and at once to satisfy and sanctify it. For Christianity is a system of marvellous adaptation to humanity; and at each new unfolding of it—each new development which the piety, or the genius of man, or the history of the church and the world may bring forth to our view—we shall feel how utterly impossible it is that it should have any other au-

thor than Him who made and fashioned the human soul.

Having thus gone over the various views on this subject—the relation between the work and the reward, and separating what is true from what is erroneous or imperfect—we attain to the whole truth. There is a reward *in* the work, and there is a reward *from* the work; and the connexion is one of grace to the exclusion of all merit, inasmuch as grace at once produces the work, and enhances the reward; and yet the connexion is one of righteousness in opposition to mere arbitrariness or fictitiousness, inasmuch as there is a moral suitableness and congruity between the two, the reward being adapted to the character and worth of the work, and arising out of the truth and righteousness of the divine character—according to these remarkable words, "God is NOT UNRIGHTEOUS to forget your work and labour of love."

Viewing, then, Christianity as a *system*—a system at once evangelical and ethical in its construction—we see how truly it is a reward.

But now, in conclusion, and in further illustration of this point, let us view Christianity as embodied in the life and history of its own Author.

No one can have read Scripture with ordinary

attention without being struck with the fact that the divine Saviour, whose actions sprung from the purest motives, was not uninfluenced by the hope of a reward.

In the first place it is manifest that he experienced a reward in the work itself, so congenial was it to his feelings as a God-glorifying work. "I delight to do thy will, O my God. Also thy law is *within my heart.*"

But secondly, it is no less manifest that there was set before him a reward following after the work and arising out of it. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." "The sufferings of Christ and *the glory that should follow.*" "*For the joy that was set before him*, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Who though he was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things

in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And look now to this intercessory prayer. The whole of it, and indeed the whole of his intercession generally, as to its basis and efficacy, is built upon his having fulfilled his part of his covenant engagements. There is, indeed, no unbecoming boldness; there is nothing like a peremptory demand or challenge on his part. Still there is a calm consciousness of integrity; there is the dignity of one who feels he has not proved unworthy of the trust committed to him; there is undoubting confidence not more in the love than in the righteousness of his heavenly Father. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Now—that is, in consequence of this,—in reward for this—I have glorified thee, *now* glorify thou me. There is reference here manifestly to a previous understanding between the two parties in the everlasting covenant ere time had being. It becomes us to speak of such mysteries with profound awe, and as much as possible in the language of Scrip-

ture, lest we should speak unadvisedly with our lips. But in the main, divines are right when they represent the work of redemption as gone about with all the formalities and securities of a covenant. There *was* a reward to be earned. Even the divine Redeemer, the God-man, was not, it seems, above this influence. And he here claims it—"Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Mark here how the work and the reward, though spoken of as distinct, are yet substantially the same—*the work* to show forth the divine glory on earth, *the reward* to behold and enjoy the divine glory in heaven.

Glory! It is a most profoundly mysterious word this. What is the precise amount of it? How shall we be able to fathom it? The original Greek word (δοξα) means opinion, fame, renown, and this is very much the meaning of it with us. But this is a very superficial and trivial sense. The Hebrew word (כבוד) signifies weight, literally. We like this grand old Hebrew word. It lets us into the heart of the thing. It intimates that there is much more in it than is generally imagined. It raises us above those paltry conceptions, those low, earthly, mean ideas we associate with it. It carries the mind upwards to the God of glory,

in whom alone all true glory resides, and from whom alone all true glory flows.

Glory! It is truly a most weighty term this, bearing the burden, so to speak, of the divine perfections—sustaining the honour of the divine character! There is deity wrapped up in that word glory! It is indeed a most sublime and sacred word, and it seems an act of desecration to apply it to aught that is human or earthly, except so far as it is the faint reflection of the uncreated source of moral excellence.

Herein lies our true glory—our true blessedness—our true reward. All else is fleeting and fantastic. Give me not the *Doxa*—the mere fame—the mere seeming—the mere display; such glory, if we must still call it so, is unsubstantial as a shadow, short-lived as a dream. But give me as my reward—give me the *Cabod*—the glory that has weight and substance in it—that bears the image and superscription of deity, and that will be immortal as its source, even an eternal weight of glory—the glory that lies in the possession of the divine image, the enjoyment of the divine favour, and the performance of the divine will.

These are comforting and elevating views, and truly we do feel that we need them. Tired of the service of Sin and Satan, sick of the pomps and

vanities of the world, dissatisfied with the imaginations of our own foolish hearts, and with the conceptions of our own ever-changing minds, we feel that we need something holier and truer—something more satisfying and more enduring.

Where shall we find it? Ye philosophers, ye moralists, ye sentimentalists, tell me where! It is the recommendation of Christianity—a recommendation this, an argument this, it bears in its own breast—that it meets me in my forlorn and all but hopeless condition, and satisfies my every want and wish; *satisfies*, do I say! surely I ought rather to say transcends.

I want work! I am born for activity, and I languish for employment for my head—my heart—my whole man. The world cannot give me the work I desire. I feel it is not worthy of me, an immortal being, endowed with energies and desires that spurn the narrow limits of time. Something within me whispers that I am spending "my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which satisfieth not." Now, Christianity, I find, gives me work—calls upon me to glorify God, and work out my own salvation, and labour for the temporal and spiritual good of others. Christ says to me, and to all, even at the eleventh

hour, even after the flower and vigour of life are well nigh over, Go, work in my vineyard.

I want a reward! My inmost soul pants for rest and recompense. I want work that will remunerate me—work that will engage my affections, and keep my whole man in healthful play —work that will fill up my time, and leave no dreary intervals between — work that will administer present enjoyment, and leave no sting behind — work that will command my Maker's approbation, and draw forth the applauding sentence, Well done!— work that will raise me in my own eyes, and make me feel that I am of some use in God's world—work that will draw down upon me the blessings of the great and the good, and gain from them a return in affection and gratitude—work that will train and prepare me for taking a still higher place in the kingdom of heaven, in the service of Him who "maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." These, we maintain, are noble and generous sentiments— truly god-like aspirations. And Christianity does not frown upon them. Christianity lays hold of them, sanctifies and directs them. Christianity gives both the will and the power to work, thus turning, with Midas-like touch, the iron into gold; and not

only so, but opens up the bright vista of a glorious future, in which thrones and sceptres, crowns and diadems, honours and pleasures, and other images of magnificence dazzle indistinctly before the mind, and tell us "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

IV.

CHRISTIANITY A CULTURE.

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."—JOHN xvii. 17-19.

CHRISTIANITY a life, a work, a reward! These are three of the many aspects under which it may be viewed. They are suggestive of each other. There are many other views that may be taken of so large a subject—so vast a theme, each of them presenting it in some new, beautiful, and interesting light, calculated to strike now one person, now another. Might we not look at it, for instance, on the side of beauty, and mark how it is fitted to elevate and refine the mind, and to satisfy the demands not only of our moral and intellectual, but of our emotional and æsthetical nature. This we might term *Christianity a culture.* Passing now from its more tasteful, pleasing, poetical side, we

might view it in its more stern, severe aspect, as a system of trial, of conflict, of preparation for the future. This we might term *Christianity a discipline.* Then, ceasing to contemplate it on any one side, under any single aspect, we might try at least to take a large and broad view of it as a system of love and unity, as the foundation of a new order of things, as the centre of attraction in this world of discord, as the bond of union and communion between us and God and all holy beings; and this we might term *Christianity a fellowship.*

Do you feel inclined to say, this is to trifle with so solemn, so urgent, so personal a matter as Christianity is? Do you feel as if we were using unwarrantable liberties with it—as if we were bringing it down to the level of other subjects by thus introducing into it the ideas and the terms of the schools of taste, of science, and of literature? Do you say, Christianity can borrow no light, no splendour from those quarters, though it may lend them of its own? Be it so. We have no hesitation in admitting, that to Christianity itself we owe that pure taste, that high *morale*, that acute perception, that profound wisdom, those lofty and spiritual aspirations, in the light of which we are able to discern and appre-

ciate its internal excellence, as a system containing so many elements of truth and beauty, and so admirably adapted to the needs of humanity. We are only giving it back its own; but we are giving it back with interest; we are laying it upon its altar with gratitude; we are hanging up in its temple the spoils we have gathered—the trophies we have won, not in our own might, but in the might of its inspiration: and it does appear to me that we can perform no more becoming and graceful duty than thus to view Christianity in its own reflected light, and to discern what deeper and richer treasures lie hidden in that sacred field than have yet been revealed to us.

Christianity a culture! What mean we by this? We mean that Christianity is the best instrument for cultivating and bringing to perfection our WHOLE nature—for raising it up from its degradation, and carrying it forward to hitherto untrodden heights of excellence.

That our nature has gone sadly into disorder, somehow or other, is beyond dispute here, and that, under the influence of the perversity that has seized it, it makes most humiliating and melancholy displays of itself, is manifest to all; and yet, despite of all this, human nature is a grand thing, grand and imposing even in its ruins. You can easily

believe it is not what it once was, or may be again. Viewed by itself, it is a great enigma. You ask, how came it into its present anomalous condition? is it always to remain in it? how can it be extricated from it? These are questions you ask in vain of human nature itself. It sends back no distinct, no satisfactory response; only a deep sigh, bespeaking utter helplessness and hopelessness, is heard from the mysterious abyss; or occasionally you may chance to hear some desperate struggle to rise out of the depths, which only issues in failure, and is followed by a deeper despair and apathy than before. The history of unaided humanity is but the repetition of such fruitless efforts.

For of all things in the world, humanity, when left to itself, is the most helpless. It is a grievous error to labour, as some in our day are doing, to bring down Christianity to the level of humanity: we must strive to raise humanity to the level of Christianity. *Christianity is not in humanity.* In vain you will seek to find it in our nature—to develope it by any process whatever—to evolve it out of intuitions, and thus to give it an *a priori* or necessary basis. The foundation is not broad enough to bear such a superstructure. The whole edifice speedily gives way. But while it is not true that Christianity is in humanity, the converse

is true, that *humanity is in Christianity*. You will find it there in perfection,—in all its lineaments, and in all its essential properties. It harmonises with its intuitions, it responds to its cravings, it supplies its wants, it rectifies its disorders. *This* is the right relation between these two. It is said, and said most truly, that they—humanity and Christianity—must admit of being harmonised; that the two cannot be in antagonism; that the age is demanding their reconciliation. Be it so. But how? Ah! here comes out the main point of difference and dispute. Some would seek for Christianity in humanity. For this purpose they are reduced to the necessity of modifying and mutilating it. They wish to bring it within the limits of their favourite humanity, and this they can accomplish only by curtailing it, and depriving it of all that is truly supernatural and divine. We cannot consent to this. We, too, love and admire humanity. We will not agree to abandon one of its genuine intuitions. We will hold by all that is essential in the true idea,—in the original type of it. We will stand up for its legitimate place and authority. We will yield to none of them in this. But precisely for this very reason we will seek for our humanity in Christianity. We will seek for it there, for nowhere else can we

find it except in a rude, disjointed state. We will seek for it there, for there only do we see it reproduced in all its pristine beauty and perfection; nay, more, we see it adorned with higher excellences and attainments. We discover how humanity may be restored, and not only restored, but elevated and advanced. Yes, humanity! *our* humanity! for humanity it is, and will be to all eternity.

You are a worshipper of humanity, perhaps. It is the object, the god, may we not call it, of your idolatry. We take you up on your own ground. We, too, reverence humanity, though we dare not worship it; and it is exactly because of this that we feel ourselves drawn towards Christianity. But what is *your* quarrel with it? Is it because it does not speak of this idol of yours with becoming respect? because it represents it as fallen, degraded, guilty? Are you shocked at finding the image you decked out with so many graces treated as a deformity, a monstrous abortion? But what if all this be only the sober, undisguised, unvarnished truth. You speak for ever of humanity. You say many fine and pretty things of it. You really wax very eloquent upon the theme. But what *is* this humanity of which you talk so grandly and mysteriously? What if it be after all only an ideal thing, a pure

abstraction, a mere mental conception. What if you have been moving in an ideal world, and conversing only with imaginary beings. Come now, and let us look this matter fairly in the face. Let us by all means understand each other,—let us do this at least; let us define our terms. Humanity! What is it? Where is it? Show us, only show us, this humanity, this pure, lofty, spiritual thing, to the standard and touchstone of which you would bring all things—God, Christ, the world. Tell us where we shall find it, for we would go far, very far, to meet with it. Is it in yourself? You will not venture to say so. Shall we find it in others? You cannot tell. The truth is, you have been disporting with a shadow. You have been using a word to which you attached no definite meaning, and which had no counterpart in the actual world of being. It is humanity in the *abstract*, you may say. But we take leave to remind you that what we have to do with in this practical world is not this, but humanity in the *concrete*,—real, living, embodied humanity—humanity as it exists in you, and me, and every one. Ah! this is a very different matter. Ideal humanity is a very fine thing, and I admit that it is sometimes right to view an object in its ideal, or theoretical side, not merely that our taste may be gratified, but that a high standard may

be set before our eyes to stimulate our exertions. Ideal humanity, I repeat, is a very fine thing; but actual humanity is a very poor thing, no better, by any means, than the bible represents it.

For, after all, it is the bible, and that alone, which throws any satisfactory light on human nature, revealing to us its original perfection, its vast capacities, its possible recovery. It makes known at once the disease and the remedy; not merely the remedy, I say, but the disease. True, it does not *make* the disease, it was there before,—it is there independently of it,—it is there altogether irrespective of any thing as to its origin,—it is there as a great FACT in our history. It does not make it, but it makes it *known;* yet not as if it were wholly unknown, for, to a certain extent, it reveals itself in the consciousness and experience of all men in all ages. Rather ought we to say, it makes that better known which, independently of any outward revelation, was imperfectly known,—very imperfectly at the best. It is of the nature of the moral malady under which humanity labours that this should be so, consisting, as it does, of the weakening of our spiritual perceptions.

It is all very well, as is the fashion now, to speak of *the divine in man*, of the higher wants and aspirations of our nature, of the utterances of the human

spirit, deep and strong, crying after the true and the good, of the cravings of the human heart after something higher and holier. All this is very touching, and, to a certain extent, very true. But whence, I demand—whence these breathings, these utterances, these longings? They are developed, it will be said. Let it be so; we will not quarrel now about a word. But how developed? how awakened? how drawn forth? How, but by *culture from without.* It is light from a higher source shining into the dark places of humanity that, I do not say imparts, but enkindles, and intensifies those feelings, and gives them a right direction. The plain fact is, the persons to whom we now refer are unconsciously viewing humanity in the light of Christianity. They come to the consideration of the subject with minds enlightened and quickened by its discoveries. It has imparted to *them* what may very well be called a Christian consciousness; and thus they discover, what they rather questionably term, the divine in man. Thus there have been awakened within them higher necessities and desires than nature knows; and yet they most ungratefully refuse to acknowledge the quarter to which they are indebted for it all! For what taught them, I ask, to reverence humanity so highly? What taught them to feel that their nature is en-

dowed with capacities which this poor world, with all its pomps and vanities, cannot satisfy? What lighted up the divine within them? What awoke the slumbering god? What called forth those voices that seem to come from the world of spirits,—those utterances that sound like the echoes of eternity? What forced upon them the painful contrast between them and the Holy One? What but the Bible! What but Christianity! It is not a matter of conjecture, but of fact. For go now to those nations whose minds have not attained to any culture higher than that of nature, and speak to them of sin and holiness, of truth and purity. These are words without meaning to them, or, at any rate, without *your* deep spiritual meaning. Talk to them of the divine in man, of the higher wants and aspirations of our nature. Alas! alas! there is nothing in them *as yet* to send back a responsive movement. You are grieved and disappointed at this. But why should you. You forget that you and they are looking at the same subject in different lights. You are erroneously transferring to them views and feelings awakened in your mind under a totally different training. *You* keenly feel the *moral* degradation of humanity; they do not. Their religion, so far as they have any thing that really answers to that sacred name, is but the product and reflec-

tion of their own vile minds, and as water never rises higher than its own level, so men will never rise above their religious system; the probability is they will fall beneath it. "You talk magnificently of the God-consciousness, and the Christian-consciousness, as something actually existing in all men. But see you not that it is a dream, a figment of a school. It is of no use to indulge in fine theories; one well-established fact destroys them all; and it is a fact that, beyond the pale of Christian culture, neither the disease of humanity, nor the cure, is adequately known.

This, then, is the first sense in which Christianity is a culture. This is its first contribution to the cause of humanity. It affords us just views of it, just views at once of its greatness and littleness,—its grandeur and meanness. It teaches us to reverence it; and this is a great matter, for when a man despises his own nature, his case is well nigh hopeless. It renders us also dissatisfied with it; and this, too, is a great matter, for this is the spring of all efforts after amelioration. Christianity thus accomplishes two apparently opposite effects which no other system does. It teaches me not to think too highly of my nature, as some theological and philosophical systems do, for it reveals to me its poverty and meanness. It teaches me, too, not to

despise my nature, nor despair of it, for it assures me that God does not despise it, nor despair of it, but has made provision for its redemption in a way of marvellous wisdom and grace.

But secondly, Christianity is a culture not only as making us acquainted with the true condition of humanity, but as fraught with healing and restorative power. It lays hold on humanity at all points. It is designed and fitted to leaven the whole man, going down to the lowest depths of his nature, and pervading and influencing it throughout all its extent and variety.

In human nature we find that unity in variety, that variety in unity, which characterise all the other works of God. Our nature is an unity, and this unity is embodied in the term *man*, and is expressed in the *I*. Whatever is thought or done is the thinking or the doing of the entire person. And yet it is a variety, as well as an unity, and this variety finds expression in the terms will, heart, conscience, and the like. Now, why do we introduce such psychological dissertations into a theological essay. We do so because we have a strong conviction, which is only deepening in the course of experience, that next to the knowledge of Christianity, which can only be obtained by looking outward, the knowledge of humanity, which can

only be obtained by looking inward, is the most important.

Divines are careful, and most right it is they should be so, to tell us that in regeneration no part of man's nature is left wholly unrenewed, and that sanctification consists in the gradual renewal of the whole man after the image of God. But is there not a tendency to generalise here too much. The words *holiness*, *sanctification*, are indeed of frequent use. But unless we make people acquainted with their own nature; unless we open up the human mind with all its vast and varied capacities; unless we explain humanity as well as Christianity, we come far short of the good we honestly and strenuously desire to do.

For most surprising it is, how little, how very little, most people do know of their own nature; large portions of it being to them a *terra incognita*, a territory never visited, and consequently never cultivated. Some parts of it are indeed well known, (how could it be otherwise) partly because their attention has been more frequently directed to them, partly because they are more frequently called into exercise on the business of the world, and the play of actual life. But other parts of it, and these the most profound and spiritual by far, are in a great measure lost sight of. They lie too

deep for unthinking, unreflecting minds—and such are most minds. In a coarse, bustling, selfish world, as ours is, these fairer and nobler treasures, pearls of the deep ocean of man's nature, are not prized; they are not *in demand;* they have no marketable value. Those exquisitely beautiful but lowly flowers—to change the metaphor—so rich in fragrance and beauty, that are to be met with only in the most retired bowers of the garden of the human soul, are overshadowed by taller and more imposing shrubs, or are rudely trodden under the foot of the careless passenger. They are too pure, gentle, and sensitive to thrive in the atmosphere of contention and selfishness. They are chilled and repressed. They are driven from a scene where there is no room allowed them to grow and effloresce. They shrink into darkness; they droop, and languish, and all but die.

And now one would think that surely religion might have come to the assistance of our poor, ill-treated nature, rescuing those fair portions of it from unmerited obscurity, and effecting a full development and perfect harmony of all those capacities with which it is enriched and adorned above all other departments of creation. In the world, nothing better could have been looked for; but in the church, should not humanity have been exhi-

bited in all its breadth. Should not *that* have formed a school of training for the perfecting of our immortal nature? Has due prominence been given to this subject in the church's teaching? We fear not. Now at length, however, humanity is asserting its claims. Our neglected nature is lifting up its voice, and demanding attention. Shall we not listen to it? We shall be compelled, I think.

Christianity was made for man, and, as it has been well said, there is something in it for every man, and *for all in every man.* And what is man? what are his necessities and capacities?

Let it be particularly noticed then, that the perfection of man's nature consists in its *harmonious development.* We have a strong conviction that in this respect the human mind has not had justice done to it. It has not got a fair trial. One has limited his care and culture to one part of his nature, another to another part. But no one has yet set himself to the arduous task of doing justice to every part of his mental constitution. And hence there has been no actual exhibition, nor anything approaching to it, of the beautiful harmony by which it is characterised. No one has yet sounded the full diapason of this noble instrument, likest, perhaps, of all instruments to the organ, in

respect of the marvellous combinations of which it is susceptible. You have listened to this noble instrument in some venerable edifice, and you have been subdued by turns and roused by its risings and fallings. Now it swells, and swells till it shakes the vaulted roof, and rolls away among the aisles like distant thunder. At one time a sweet and simple melody is played upon the higher keys, and breathes upon your ear like a zephyr; at another time you are startled, and amazed, and hurried along on a tide of the most intricate, unexpected, unimaginable harmony. It can imitate the sound of all other instruments, the mellow flute, the marshal trumpet, the piercing clarionet, the deep bassoon. It is an orchestra of itself. There is no single instrument that can compete with it. It is the highest achievement of musical genius, and yet it is an exceedingly simple instrument. Where, then, lies its unrivalled excellence? It lies, as one says, in a single word—Combination. Such is the human mind in its construction, simple, yet manifold; and such is the music it is capable of yielding—music in the fullest sense of the word, as including both melody and harmony. If you cultivate one part of your nature only, you will produce melody, but harmony is the result of the cultivation of the whole.

If a person cultivate only his *intellectual nature*, he will be a cold, hard, sceptical being, incapable of any generous enthusiasm, or any warm attachment, or any religious fervour, or any poetic sentiment. Alas! for the world if such men prevailed. It is not among these we are to look for the loving parent, the affectionate friend, the devoted patriot, the disinterested philanthropist, the devout Christian.

Or if a person cultivate only his *emotional nature*, if he is all heart and no head, as some are all head and no heart, he will be a mere creature of feeling, the sport of fancy, the victim of passion, the martyr of sensibility. He will be possessed of no solidity and strength of character. He will be incapable of taking a calm and dispassionate view of things upon their merits. He will be driven about like a ship without a rudder, the sport of every wind that blows. Such emotional, sensitive, ethereal beings, are not fit for a world like this.

Or, if a person cultivate only his *moral and religious nature*, he will become a gloomy fanatic, or a raving enthusiast, or a dreamy mystic, or a religious sentimentalist, or a harsh dogmatist and narrow-minded bigot. Though this is unquestionably the highest part of our nature, yet it is only when conscience acts in unison with the intellect

and the heart, that it is under safe guidance. All history shows that religion dissevered from the intellect and the heart runs into opposite and dangerous extremes. It is of great importance that the intellectual and emotional elements should have their due place in our religious system, and in our religious experience.

Or, if a person cultivate only his *æsthetical nature*, as it is now called, he will be a mere man of taste, a creature of imagination, living in an unreal world, and unfit for the sober realities of life.

And finally, if a person cultivate only his *active or volitional nature*, that is, if his *will* be too strongly developed, he will become self-willed, obstinate, ungovernable. When one who has naturally a strong will is possessed at the same time of a cold heart, a narrow intellect, and a perverted conscience, he is one of the most dangerous beings in the world.

And let it not be said that all this is metaphysical, and more suited for the philosopher than the divine. It is not so. It is eminently practical and evangelical, opening up as it does the whole doctrine of sanctification. Here we have something to guide us in aiming at the sanctification of our nature. For it is not enough

that we desire it, and pray for it, as *a general thing*, but we must be prepared to receive it in *detail*. And have we not here, too, the explanation of a perplexing phenomenon of no infrequent occurrence in the church? You have a Christian friend; you cannot doubt in the main that he is a Christian—that he is a partaker of grace. You cannot doubt this without doubting the existence of personal Christianity altogether. And yet you are shocked—startled at finding in him, not once only, but many times, the manifestation of a most unchristian temper, a most unamiable disposition, a strange waywardness and inconsistency, or, it may be, a low moral tone in reference to some things. The explanation is this;—there is grace in the man but he is not carrying it fully out,—he is not stirring it up into exercise. He has got the principle of holiness in him, but he is not seeking to have his whole nature thoroughly and equally leavened with it. The Spirit dwells in him, but he is continually grieving Him by resisting His sanctifying influence on some part of his nature more especially. And yet the man believes in something called sanctification, and honestly, as he thinks, prays for it. I do believe that what he needs is that he should be more thoroughly acquainted with his own nature, and with the nature of sanctification too,

as not a mystical, wholesale, abstract thing, but a moral culture, that is to say, a minute, laborious, watchful, unceasing cultivation of every portion of his compound nature, in the way of course which the Author of his nature has appointed,—by his own Spirit, and through his own truth.

Christianity is addressed to the whole of man's nature, and it cannot be aright understood and fully embraced but by the whole man. It is not one part of our nature that has suffered from the fall, but every part of it, and Christianity—the gospel, has this advantage over every other religion, that it fully meets the necessities of humanity. It addresses itself to man's *intellect* in its doctrines, and in the bearing of these on our condition, and on the divine character. It addresses itself to the *conscience* in its views of sin, duty, responsibility, law. It addresses itself to the *heart* in its appeals founded on the love of Christ. It addresses itself to the *will* in its overtures of pardon and peace. And it addresses itself to the *imagination*, and to our finer sentiments and susceptibilities in its sublime views of the glory of God, and of his mighty works of grace and creation.

There is a marvellous variety and breadth in Christianity, suited to that marvellous variety and breadth which characterises the human mind.

This is a proof that it was made for man as man, and that it was made by Him who knew what was in man, because he formed the human soul. As culture, therefore, for the mind, independently of all other considerations, there is no study like the study of the Bible. But there is yet another contribution, still more important than any yet mentioned, which Christianity has made to the culture of humanity. It reveals, and is the vehicle of a divine influence. The Holy Spirit has direct and immediate intercourse with the human spirit. This was needed. This completes the culture. To those who ask him, he is given. Under this divine, spiritual, supernatural influence, and in the use of all other means, our prostrate nature is raised up, and is preparing for higher exercises and enjoyments than the present.

We have said that development is the great law of our nature—that progress in one direction or other is its characteristic. We have put to ourselves this question, Is there any limit to its advancement; is there any goal at which it must stop short; will the time ever come when farther improvement is impossible?—and we have been bold enough to answer no. What a glorious prospect is thus opened up to those who will fall in with the merciful provision of the gospel for

their spiritual renovation! Eternal progress! Never-ending advancement! Perpetual development!

In the contemplation of this the mind sinks—the imagination stoops on its wearied wing—"the giddy brain grows dim." We are fain to return to humbler thoughts; and meanwhile are animated to press after higher and higher attainments.

> How near he presses on the angel's wing!
> Which is the seraph? which the born of clay?

And now, let us mark how the passage which has been placed at the head of this discourse bears on the subject in hand. What we have been calling culture—adopting, for a time, a term of everyday use, to shew that we are not necessitated to confine ourselves entirely to purely theological language—the Bible calls sanctification, a term of immeasurably greater depth and significance. Every other word is poor compared with this; and it is worthy of being remarked, that not only the ideas of Scripture, but its very terms, are above this age and every age. We cannot afford to dispense with either.

It is truly a sublime word this—Sanctification. To perceive this, we must have realising views of that great, spiritual, god-like thing, HOLINESS,

which is the essence of it. And then, again, for this end we must have realising views of the divine character, in conformity to which this holiness lies. And finally, for this end we must have a power of spiritual discernment conferred upon us; for God can be known only in his own light—"In thy light shall we see light."

The common view of sanctification is, that it is a *making* holy; and yet this is by no means the only, nor the chief idea involved in it. The grand underlying idea is consecration, the setting apart for the divine service. We do not fathom the depth of this word, we do not catch the full inspiration of it unless we view it in this light. While we regard it merely as the removal of sin—of moral defilement—we take but a negative view of it. This is not the fundamental, essential idea. There may be sanctification without any need for purification, or moral cleansing. The actual removal of sin, in its guilt and power, can ever form a part of it only in as far as it is necessary—and it is necessary in us—to the attainment of this high end. And it is only by taking this view of it that we can vindicate its application to the Redeemer—"I sanctify myself;" and as it is elsewhere said, "whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world." We are startled at

this. Christ sanctified! we exclaim, how can this be? Was he not free from sin? Had he not a divine nature, and a spotless human nature? True, most true. But we are using the word in our own arbitrary, confined, inferior sense, and not in its true, deep, scriptural meaning—that of consecration for some grand and holy work. That *we* may be sanctified—that we may be fitted and counted worthy to serve God—that we may be of any use in shewing forth his glory, it is indispensably necessary that we should be purified—that our nature should be delivered from its grievous moral taint—necessary it is that we should be thus sanctified and made vessels "meet for the Master's use." This is the sanctification we need; and it is a means to an end, and that end the consecration of the whole man, with all its gifts of heart, will, conscience, intellect, taste, feeling, disposition, to the divine honour. Is there not something truly grand and elevating even in the thought of this? Does it not tend to exalt our conceptions of sanctification—to make it a more profound and spiritual thing, and also, I think, a more intelligible thing? For it seems to me that our views, for the most part, are exceedingly low and indistinct, and that this arises partly from a want of clearness of definition,—it

being too readily taken for granted that certain phrases—holiness, sanctification, and the like—are well understood, and that it is enough to reiterate them in people's ears; while, in truth, they are but familiar sounds, empty symbols, that stand for little or nothing. They are purely theological terms, and only the initiated understand them. But when we say, holiness implies conformity to the divine will, sanctification means consecration to the divine service, a sanctified person is one who has come out of the world and lives for God,—much of the darkness and mysteriousness with which the subject is surrounded is removed, and all is done that can be done, except by a higher influence, to make men acquainted with the reality.

"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth!" Behold here the true nature and method of sanctification opened up. Its *nature*, our being made like Christ, like him in his conformity to the will of his heavenly Father, and in subjection to his authority! Its *method*, the Son of God laying hold of humanity, and redeeming, sanctifying, consecrating it for God! *For their sakes*—in behalf of those he came to save; "Forasmuch as *the children* are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself *took part of the same*, that through death

he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." *I sanctify myself*—I offer myself up as a sacrifice to God; I lay myself on the divine altar; I consecrate myself as a propitiation for their sins, as an example for their imitation; I take human nature upon me to shew how beautiful and perfect it is capable of being made,—to prove beyond doubt that it is not an utterly lost and accursed thing, but is capable of being restored to more than its original brightness. *That they also may be sanctified*—made holy like me, and devoted as I am to "Him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things," made partakers of my image, adorned with all the graces of my character. *Through the truth*—as a medium revealing the divine character, as a bond of union betwixt me and all the members of my mystical body, as the instrument of regeneration whereby the Spirit renews the soul, as the mirror of divinity, the "glass in which they beholding my glory shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Say now if humanity is not to be found in Christianity—found there in its genuine perfection—found there in the TRUTH that reveals the image of God, after which it is renewed—found there in the GRACE that triumphs over the power of sin—

found there in the PERSON of the Redeemer, the second Adam, the Man Christ Jesus, the Man of Men!

Oh! despair not of your nature. It is sadly defaced. It is steeped in sin. It is sunken, crushed, paralysed. But despair not of it. Look to the Saviour of men, to his atonement, his grace, his example. Pray to the source of all power and might, and let this be your prayer, "Sanctify us through thy truth, thy word is truth."

The idea is grand! Christ the type and first fruits of restored humanity! Conformity to the image of God's dear Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren! This *is* elevation. This *is* consecration. And this is the end (how noble and worthy of God!) of the whole economy of salvation, and of divine providence,—of the decree of the Father, of the work of the Son, of the indwelling of the Spirit; this the result that engaged the Eternal Mind from before all ages, and that will remain the object of its delightful contemplation for ever!

V.

CHRISTIANITY A DISCIPLINE.

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—JOHN xvii. 14, 15, 16.

IN treating of Christianity as a *discipline*, we are led to look at it in what some may term its sterner and severer aspect. There is unquestionably, at first sight, something rather forbidding in this word discipline, calling up, as it does, before the mind many painful ideas. The mind is thus thrown into an attitude of suspicion, of antagonism towards it. If there is much in Christianity to attract, it were in vain to say that there is nothing to repel. If there are points of affiliation, there are also points of contrast, and these latter must not be kept out of sight,—though they need not be obtruded upon the attention, and put in the very forefront, for they will come up in due time, and in

their own order, when the mind is fairly and honestly in contact with it. We cannot long conceal them, if we would, and there is no reason why we should seek to do so, for Christianity will bear to be looked at on every side; and though, to a hasty observer, one side may appear more inviting than another, a deeper and closer view of it will convince us that it is all equally attractive, nay, that those very portions which at first seem most dark and mysterious, are in reality the brightest and most precious of all.

Let no one, then, be alarmed at the view now given of Christianity as a discipline,—as a conflict, as a trial. Why, this is not peculiar to Christianity. He who counts upon getting through life without this, will find himself mistaken. Life is a battle,—a struggle, and a sore one; and this world is the arena on which this battle is to be fought, this struggle to be carried on. From our birth to our death we are under discipline of some kind or other. There is the discipline of the family; and there is the discipline of the school; and there is the discipline of the workshop, or the counting-house; and there is the discipline of society. There is mental discipline; and there is moral discipline. There is the discipline of the heart, and of the understanding, and of the conscience, and of the

will and dispositions. Learning is a discipline, and so is business, and so is politics, and so is philosophy, and why should it be deemed a strange thing that Christianity is a discipline; that it, too, has its severer aspect, its difficulties, its disagreeables, its sacrifices, its hardships, ere the goal be reached, and the prize won? We ask no more for our religion than that it should have impartial justice done to it. We protest against its being regarded as something so very peculiar in this respect. We deny that it subjects people to painful sacrifices, and severe struggles, and arduous duties, from which they would otherwise be free. The plain fact is, we have but a choice—hardly that, perhaps, in some cases—of the *kind* of discipline which we shall undergo. Discipline in some measure, conflict in some form, pain in some quarter, we must be prepared to face. We may not like the species of discipline to which Christianity would subject us, and we may reject it. But let us at least know what we are doing. Let us not deceive ourselves with the expectation that all will be smooth and pleasant; most assuredly it will not be so.

We speak of the adaptation of Christianity to human nature,—to its cravings, to its necessities; but the truth is, this adaptation would not be perfect if Christianity were not a discipline. The

gospel is of the nature of a remedy, and all remedies are more or less painful. This is another point of analogy between this aspect of Christianity, and other parts of divine providence. If we quarrel with the remedial measures, it is because we have no just view of the magnitude and danger of the disease. Ah, yes! it is not every application that will reach down to the core of our disorder, and expel it from our moral constitution. Severe treatment is necessary, and being necessary, it is merciful. It is painful, but salutary; and thus it is that the more enlarged and profound our acquaintance with Christianity becomes, the more our admiration of it is raised as a system of unparalleled wisdom and grace.

In following out, then, this view, we would remark that Christianity is disciplinary in as far as it requires of us *a certain mental training and preparation for the reception of its truths.*

These truths are humbling and sanctifying, and thus come at once into violent collision with the native pride and depravity of the heart. Now begins a struggle, in some cases very severe and prolonged, between the authority of God speaking in his word, and the rebellious will of the individual man. In some cases the struggle issues in the rejection of these truths; in some cases it issues in

their reception. How this last result is to be accounted for needs not to be explained to those who believe in Divine Influence. In the meantime, we are viewing the question rather on the side of man than on the side of God, and what we wish to bring out is the nature and greatness of that inward conflict, and inward change which are implied in the very act of one's becoming a Christian. There is a mental discipline gone through, a schooling down, as Dr. Chalmers calls it, of the whole soul, a breaking up of the heart, an awakening of the conscience, a subduing of the will,—all of which involves much severe exercise of mind, great mental effort and conflict, a mighty moral revolution, as the same great writer calls it. This is what we may term the philosophical or psychological view of the matter. The more strictly theological, or scriptural view of it is, that it is a *law-work*. "The law," says Paul, "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." It was so then, it is so now, and ever will be. We must all enter into this school; we must all pass under this rod; we must all undergo this discipline; we may, some of us, need more of it than others; but nothing will bring down the proud heart of man, and prepare him for the reception of the grace of the gospel, but the holy law of God realised in all the extent

of its claims and sanctions. It is this that brings the sinner to sit as a little child at the feet of Jesus. It is this that brings him trembling and convicted to the foot of the cross. It is this that cures him of his pride and self-righteousness, and makes him fain to be saved in God's own way. This is an *inward* discipline. There may be along with this an outward discipline, consisting of afflictions of various kinds, which are not without their use in weakening the heart's attachment to the world, and shutting it up to the Saviour. But it is the inward discipline that is the chief thing. It is in vain to deny that Christianity makes large demands upon the natural heart, requiring it to receive doctrines of deep and awful mysteriousness, to admit a new occupant to sit on the throne of its affections, to give up its longest and most dearly cherished attachments. And will any one say that this is easily done, done as a matter of course, done without our knowing how or when? It is easy indeed to go a certain length in the admiration of Christianity. But when the heart comes closely into contact with it, and its claims are realised, then it is that a sudden and strong recoil is felt, that a positive enmity is awakened, which indicates a thorough alienation of heart from God, a deep under-current of unbelief, of which we had

previously no conception. Every one who has got beyond the mere form and outside of religion has felt this, and has thus learned, in the light of his own experience, that this inward discipline of which we speak, this mental training and preparation for the faith of the gospel, is a deep necessity of man's nature viewed in connection, or rather in contrast, with the high and holy character of Christianity.

We remark farther, that Christianity is disciplinary in as far as it calls us to *carry on a warfare against the remaining sinfulness of our nature.*

The Christian life is a conflict. We are all familiar with this; it is one of the common-places of theology, one of the stereotyped expressions of the pulpit. And yet it is no common-place truth. It is a deep truth, and few of us, it is to be feared, have entered into the spirit of it. It is no mere metaphor, but a terrible reality. Christianity does not undertake to deliver us at once and immediately from all sin. When embraced in faith, it brings us deliverance from its condemning and its reigning power. But sanctification is gradual and progressive. And why is this the case? Why, but because Christianity is disciplinary in its character from first to last. Because it is throughout a system of trial—a system that calls into exercise

the deepest feelings and strongest capacities of our nature—a system of human effort as well as of divine grace—a system that will not suffer the Christian to be idle, but stirs him up to "work out his salvation with fear and trembling." His old enemy sin is therefore allowed to remain still within him to try him, to discipline him, to train him to "endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and thus to prepare him for a higher triumph and reward, when he has fought *out* the "good fight of faith." The continued existence of sin within him is a severe discipline, as it calls for constant *watchfulness*, lest his sleepless foe should gain an advantage over him; for constant *prayerfulness*, that he may obtain the grace in which alone he can overcome—"prayer will keep his armour bright;" for constant *faith*, whereby he may "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one;" for constant *resistance*, against all the movements of his own deceitful heart, and against all the allurements of sense; and for constant *patience and perseverance*, that he may not weary of the conflict, and sleep upon his armour, and dream of safety when danger is nigh. In no other way would these graces of the Christian life be called into play. But for this disciplinary treatment there would be no room for the exhibition, and the strengthening of some of

the finest features of the Christian character; yes, the *strengthening* of them, for it is true of all our physical, mental, moral, and spiritual endowments and capacities, that they grow by use, that they acquire a glow of strength and beauty in very proportion as they are put forth upon their proper objects.

Now we do think it is of great importance to understand the reasonableness (the moral necessity, in fact) of the constitution of the Christian scheme in this respect, namely, of its providing for the believer's gradual, and not immediate, emancipation from sin, or, in other words, of Christianity being a discipline. It tends to reconcile us to an arrangement with which we are but too apt to quarrel. You long, sincerely long, to be freed from indwelling sin. What Christian does not sympathize with you. You pray earnestly for this. So far there is much in all this that is good and praiseworthy. And yet what if there be not a little that is less so,—what if there be somewhat of selfishness in it? What if it be that you are only wishing to escape from a painful, yet withal to you most salutary and needful discipline? What if you are only becoming tired of the spiritual warfare, of watching, and praying, and believing, and resisting, and overcoming your evil desires, your unruly appetites, your rebellious dispositions?

What if you are more anxious for present enjoyment than for future good to your soul, or for the glory of God either? Would it be really for your best and highest interests that you should be spared this inward discipline? Come now, and dwell for a moment upon the other side of the question; contemplate the advantages, as well as the disadvantages, of such a struggle. It keeps you low and humble, and is not that good for you, good for all of us? It makes you better acquainted with the plague of your own heart, it reveals to you more fully the deep depravity of your nature, and is not that good for you? It increases your hatred of sin as the enemy of your peace, and as wielding a prodigious power over you, and is not that good for you? It endears to you the grace of the gospel, it draws you closer to Christ, it teaches you more and more your dependence on the Holy Spirit for holiness, and is not that good for you? Are not all these things good for you, good for us all, very good, essentially necessary, in short? Could we do without such experience? Would we have been without such discipline, painful and humiliating as it unquestionably has been? I think not. There are times, no doubt, when we feel otherwise. But in our calmer moments we cannot but feel and acknowledge the wisdom and

the goodness that preside over us, and deal with us, rather according to our necessities than our wishes. When our measure of grace and glory have been attained, then will this inward discipline, this spiritual warfare, come to a close, but not till then; and in the view of this, let us, with the apostle—when treating of this same subject—thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We would remark, finally, that Christianity is disciplinary in as far as it requires us to *remain in this world of duty and trial, and to act our part in it as God may have determined our position.*

The world is a training school for the Christian. This will explain why he is not removed from the world when through grace he is "chosen out of it;" or, on the supposition of his being left in it, why his relation to it is not in some way so changed as that he shall be above the sphere of its influence. Why is he still left in the precise position, socially and politically, in which he was found at the time of his conversion? Nay, so far is his position from being improved, it is in some respects rendered more trying. New trials, new difficulties, new conflicts spring up, arising out of his having come out of the world, and encountering its enmity, arising too, from his more acute perceptions, and more spiritual feeling and discernment

in regard to the evils that abound in it. Why is he left in such a world? It is for the glory of God, and for his own spiritual good; and the world is suited to answer both of these high ends; it is an arena on which he may so live and act as to promote the divine glory and his own sanctification. The world, we repeat, is a training school for the Christian.

Now it is of great importance that he should take this view of the world, and of his position in it—namely, that it answers the end of his spiritual discipline, and of his training for heaven. How common is it to say that his connexion with a present world is hurtful to the Christian, entangling his affections, irritating his mind, debasing his thoughts. It is a never-ceasing source of vexation and injury to him. How much happier and holier would he be were he somehow or other dissociated from it—were there some little ethereal world to which he could be transported, where he might breathe a purer air, converse with purer beings, and engage in purer occupations. Who has not oft-times sighed for this? Who has not sympathised with the Psalmist when he said in words of surpassing beauty and pathos, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest?" Who has not envied those who have

gone before to heaven, and uttered the wish, Oh! that I were with them. We have often done this —all of us; and we call this heavenly-mindedness. We think that these are moments of peculiar spirituality and elevation, and that they are well-pleasing to God. And yet we may be mistaken. We may be consulting our own feelings rather than our own good or God's glory. We say, these worldly cares fret, pollute, and injure the mind—drawing it off divine things, marring its progress in grace, and interrupting its communion with God. There is truth here, but not the whole truth. We blame the world, and yet the world is not so much the cause as the occasion of all this. The evil is in the heart, and all the world does, or can do, is to bring it forth to light. And is it not well it should be made manifest? It is thus, and thus only, we can come to know ourselves aright. I had never known—may the Christian say—how much sin there was in me, how much earthliness of mind, how much fretfulness and irritability of temper, how little faith and patience, submission and meekness I had, were it not that I was brought into rude conflict with the stormy elements of this world's strife and contention; were it not that I was reduced to straits of various kinds; were it not that I met with many sore bereavements and bitter disappointments;

were it not that I was at one time raised high, at another time brought low; were it not that I had to face persecution, and to encounter opposition. All this was for my advantage, for it was the means of revealing to me my inmost character. Had I been suffered to pass through the world, as over a calm, untroubled lake, that pictures the blue sky, and every little cloud that flits over its face; had I been suffered to walk in flowery paths, I would have formed a very erroneous idea of myself, and others would have done the same. I would have thought myself, and others would have given me credit for being, far better than I am. And not knowing myself, what a poor, weak, worldly, unstable creature I was, I had not known so well my need of divine grace. My experience in this world, arising out of my connection with it, though painful and humiliating to myself, has been eminently salutary, for it has taught me, as I could not otherwise have been taught, my need of a better righteousness than my own for acceptance, and my need of better strength than my own to uphold me. And it has counteracted my love for the world itself, which has proved so inimical to my peace, and quickened my desires after that better world where sin and sorrow are unknown! Oh! yes; I would not have missed such discipline for any consideration.

Nor shall I quarrel with my lot—with my condition in the world, be what it may, for I am assured it is precisely what my necessities, my best interests, even those of my soul demand. I am no judge of this, but there is One who is, and never, never shall I attempt to thwart Him, or say unto Him, What dost Thou? He knows my character, and what treatment I need. He knows what will keep me low and dependent on himself. He knows what work I have to do, and what preparation is necessary to fit me for it. He knows to what future glory he designs to raise me, and through what process of purification I must be made to pass in my way to it. Thus may every Christian speak of the "conduct of divine providence;" thus may he characterise the way by which the Lord has led him. It has been a right way, a good way, a suitable way. All things have been made to work together for his good as loving God, and called according to his purpose.

The world, then, is a school of training and discipline to the Christian, and this is the reason why his connexion with it is maintained. It tries his strength of principle; it tries his faith, his integrity, his firmness, his spirituality, his patience, his endurance. Right discipline is good for the mind. It strengthens it, gives it a tone, imparts energy

to it, rouses it to exertion, and prepares it for deeds of heroism and renown. Without discipline the mind becomes weak, feeble, relaxed, and unfit for anything. It is discipline that makes men great. Were there no conflict to maintain, no arduous duties to perform, no powerful enemies to encounter, no dangerous temptation to resist, there could be no true greatness of character. These things make the man,—make the hero,—make the martyr. If you look at the eleventh chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, you will find that all those whose names have been deemed worthy of being enshrined in that bright catalogue passed through an ordeal —a severe discipline of some kind or other. To them the world was an arena for maturing and displaying their graces, and for glorifying God by these graces, his own work in their souls.

We must beware, therefore, of being discontented with our position in the world, or of attempting to flee from it, for in so doing we are attempting to thwart God in his plans; we are fleeing from duty, from danger, from discipline.

It will at once occur to every one, that we have here an antidote to a popish error, Monasticism, namely. Christianity is not a system of this kind. There is nothing *unworldlike* about it. It lifts men in spirit, and aim, and hope, above the world;

but it does not place them in antagonism to it, it does not render them indifferent to it, it does not bid them flee from it. Its sphere of operation and manifestation is the world,—this very world we live in, the society in which we move, the rank to which we belong, the profession which we follow. This is our sphere for serving the Redeemer, glorifying God, benefiting others, and improving our own moral character.

Christianity is not like a sickly plant that lives only in a hot-house, and when exposed to the open air is killed by the frost of a single night. More like is it to a hardy evergreen that strikes its roots deep, and that no winter strips of its foliage. Our Christianity is worth nothing if it cannot fit us for the battle of life, if it do not strengthen us for the duties and trials of the world, if it do not brace up the powers of our minds, and make us strong, vigorous, healthy, brave Christians who can look the world boldly in the face,—who can take their own place in the world, and exert their due influence,—who can use the world without abusing it,—who can carry their Christianity into all the departments of this world's business and politics,—who can shew the world that religion makes men neither fools nor knaves, neither incapables nor hypocrites. We greatly want a sturdy Christianity that will

bear the brunt of the world's assaults,—that will stand its rude shocks, and bear the *tear and wear* of every day life. We greatly want strong, manly, well-disciplined, well-balanced Christians who can engage in the undertakings and conflicts of their age with unimpaired spirituality and undiminished grace. There is something altogether wrong with us when we shrink from coming boldly forward and taking our own part, our own share of responsibility, and of labour in the great cause of Christianity and humanity. We say, perhaps, "We cannot do so with safety. When we mingle in the conflict we lose our spirituality. It is not for us to act as others do, who seem to live for ever in an atmosphere of strife and bustle." The true explanation is this, we have lost sight of that aspect in which we have now been contemplating Christianity, namely, as a discipline. We do not love this aspect of it. Ours has been an apathetic, dreamy, selfish Christianity. Christianity has been with us a culture, it is time it should be a discipline. It is time we should surrender ourselves fully to its disciplinary character, and imbibe its disciplinary spirit. It is time we should offer ourselves sacrifices on its altar for the glory of God and the good of man. It is time we should listen to its trumpet-call to gird on the Christian panoply, and come to

the help of the Lord against the mighty. Think of the Captain of our salvation, whose whole life was one of discipline, of hard labour, and sore fight with the world's opposition. Was there any shrinking on his part? Did he not endure the cross, and despise the shame? Did he not nerve himself for the most dreadful of all conflicts? Did he not set his face like a flint, so that nothing could move him? And Christ's disciples should be like himself. He has left them in the world to be his witnesses, his agents, his ambassadors.

Would you know how to act in the world, and towards the world. Hear what he says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." How exactly does this indicate the Christian's relation to the world—in it, but not of it. *In it*, this expresses the point of connexion with the world. *Not of it*, this expresses the point of separation from the world.

If anything can make the Christian understand his position in this world, and reconcile him to it, it is the thought that Christ prays to his Father, not that he would take him out of the world, but that he would keep him from the evil. *Not that thou wouldest take them out of the world;* for that would not be either for their good or his glory.

They have something yet to do and something yet to suffer. They have a purifying process to undergo ere they can be made meet for the inheritance of saints, incorruptible, and undefiled. And not till this disciplining and refining process is complete, and there is no more for them to do or to suffer, will the Son pray to the Father for their removal, saying, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." *But that thou wouldest keep them from the evil.* Ah! that is for their comfort, that is better than their being actually taken out of the world, and if they are in a right state of mind they will feel this. They will be more anxious to glorify God on earth, than to enjoy him in heaven. They will be more anxious to be delivered from sin than from suffering, for sin is the only real evil, and exemption from this they are ensured,—exemption, that is, to this extent, that it shall not prevail over them, and prove their undoing. This they often dread. They tremble at the thought of continuing long in a world where their eternal salvation is put in such jeopardy. But they have only to bethink themselves of the Saviour's intercession; they have only to remember that while they are battling with the

winds and the waves, Jesus is in yonder mountain praying; they have only to lay hold by faith of this most precious promise, to feel raised above the world, and strengthened for whatsoever evil may assault them.

Most assuredly there is nothing in the believer's connexion with the world unduly to alarm him. Let him only have the "mind of Christ," and he will have that in him which will guide him safely through its dangerous and mazy paths, and uphold him in the midst of its fiery trials. Let him judge of everything that befalls him in life in this light—this is discipline for me, how shall I best improve it for my spiritual good. He will meet with this discipline daily, I had almost said hourly. He will meet with it in the commonest every-day duties and cares of life. It is not in great things only that discipline lies hid. Oft times the severest discipline—the sorest trial of faith and temper and general character—is to be found in matters of very small moment viewed by themselves. In fact all is disciplinary in some way or other.

And does not this invest life—every one's life—with an importance and an interest it would not otherwise possess, connecting it so closely with the moral government of God on the one hand,

and with our own moral character and everlasting destiny on the other?

Oh! for grace to enable us to fall in with the arrangements of infinite wisdom, and to derive benefit from every event in our history, which, though painful now, will be made to tell advantageously upon the future, and will go to increase the sum of blessedness in that world where such discipline will no more be required.

VI.

CHRISTIANITY A FELLOWSHIP.

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."—JOHN xvii. 21-23.

WE live in an age when, both in the world and in the church, both in philosophy and religion, there is a striving after what has been termed *a higher unity* than has yet been attained. There is a growing dissatisfaction with the present disjointed fragmentary state of things. There is a strong conviction that this is not as it ought to be and might be—that it is not as it once was, and shall be again. The demand is for some broad, catholic basis which may form a meeting-place for at least friendly intercourse; for some grand underlying truth which may serve as a foundation for the re-construction of systems diverse, but not

opposite; for some simple yet comprehensive scheme of thought and action, which will gather up whatever is good and true—and where do we *not* find some goodness, and some truth, though it be in an almost infinitesimal degree—and unite it in one harmonious whole. Is all this possible? Theoretically, we believe, it is. Practically, we fear, it is a more difficult achievement than some people imagine. If we ask, Who is equal to a task like this, we are met with the prophetic announcement of the Coming Man, who is to be saint or sage, poet or philosopher, or, peradventure all these in one! It is thus that an air of romance and ridicule is thrown over a subject which contains a great truth, and is worthy of being discussed with all due solemnity and sobriety of mind. Liberty! Fraternity! Equality! When we hear such words we scarce know whether to laugh or be angry, so absurd, so vicious, so wild are their associations; and yet these are but the exaggerated expressions of sentiments and aspirations that lie very deep, and are working like leaven, in the souls of our most earnest and spiritual thinkers. All classes of men have, in fact, caught the infection. There is a positive enthusiasm abroad upon the subject, and truly it is a theme well calculated to enkindle enthusiasm—

none more so. Surely these aspirations, this enthusiasm, are not wholly of this earth, and are not doomed to pass away, and to die like music. Certain it is that this is one of the features and tendencies of the age, and it is well to note it, and, if possible, to guide it, for this is precisely what is needed.

What does the age want? What would it be at? Can it tell? Not exactly perhaps; still less can it tell how to get at it. It is a sadly disordered world we live in, that is clear. It has long been so, and in this respect we are no worse than those who went before. The elements of strife abound in society, and set individual against individual, family against family, nation against nation, sect against sect. But when was it otherwise? There is nothing new in all this; only there is this difference, and it is an important one, and all in favour of our own times, that the world is groaning more heavily under this disorganization, and is making desperate efforts to right itself. It is getting angry, in fact, with its condition, and is resolved, it seems, to bear it no longer! But what if it *must* bear it. What if the disorders it feels so acutely—the discord and strife that tear it asunder, and split it into a thousand fragments—arise out of moral causes, and are inseparable

from these? What if, in being dissatisfied with its condition, it is in reality finding fault with the moral government of God! "It is hard to kick against the pricks," and yet this is precisely what the world is doing. It has never ceased to feel, more or less, its misery. And yet I believe that up to this hour it is as ignorant of the cause and origin of this as ever. The cause of this disorder, this disharmony, is sin. And this reveals to us more clearly perhaps than any other aspect of it, what is the true character of sin, as apostacy from God. It is the act of the creature dissociating itself from the Creator,—so far of course, and only so far, as this is possible. It is an attempt to throw off his authority. It is an assertion of independence. We speak of the fall of man. Now what is this but just the breaking up of the race into so many isolated units, into so many would-be independent agencies. The true centre of unity was abandoned, and as many new centres set up as there are individuals, each one seeking to make himself the centre of a sphere more or less large, and to draw towards him the homage of others. This is sin—an essentially revolutionary, disuniting, disorganising thing. The result of it is a moral chaos, utter confusion, nothing in its right place, element warring with element, no

order, no beauty, but a formless void with deep darkness brooding over all, and aggravating the horror of the scene. This is the fruit of sin, or rather it is sin itself, sin perpetuating itself and acting fully out its own spirit and tendency on the arena of this world. Such a state of things cannot cure itself; it can only grow worse and worse. There is within the world itself no restorative power, no principle of rectification. It has entered on a downward progress which it cannot check; a principle of departure has been set in motion which it cannot counteract. It cannot be otherwise. That such a world as ours should be a happy, peaceful, united world is simply impossible. The family of man has thrown off the control of their common parent, and the consequences have been such as we see exhibited in the case of families among ourselves; they have quarrelled with one another, they have fallen to pieces, they have disputed about the inheritance, they have become estranged from each other in heart and interest. There was then felt the grievous want of a common bond of union—of one centre of attraction—which would preserve them, each in his own little orbit, and cause them to move with the regularity, and the music of the spheres. Even so it is with the universal family. Even so apparently it is

throughout all the various departments of God's vast universe. There is first a common dependence upon some one grand central object which serves as the connecting link of the whole system, and then there is a mutual inter-dependence, or relation of utility of each to each. There is no such thing as absolute independence to be found anywhere except in the supreme object, the infinite and eternal One; nowhere do we meet with that perfect isolation and self-sufficiency which it is the wild dream of fallen man to establish for himself. Mad attempt! and impious as it is foolish. Vain man! he knows not that he is at war with the whole character of God, and with the constitution of the whole universe, natural and moral.

The race, then, has broken loose from God, and has fallen into a state of disunion. There is no fellowship, no community and interchange of heart and soul between man and God. It is this only, be it particularly noticed, that is worthy of the name of fellowship. For true fellowship is a deep thing; it lies not on the surface; it implies sympathy, oneness of mind, mutual understanding and agreement, familiar and friendly intercourse, the responsive beat of heart to heart, soul answering to soul as face answers to face in water. Unless we lay hold of the deep, spiritual import of this

word fellowship or communion, we shall not get into the heart of this subject. We shall not be able to understand how completely sin interfered with such a fellowship as this, introducing, as it did, an element of estrangement, alienating man from God, and by consequence man from man. This is going to the root of the matter, and it is always right to do this when we can. This is laying bare the fundamental evil. This is tracing the malady up to its origin, and the origin of the evil suggests the remedy. What is required, upon the supposition of any re-union of the estranged parties? You will at once say, A new centre of unity. And what is that? Christianity reveals it. It is the person of Christ. And this lets us into the reason of the marvellous constitution of his person. The problem to be solved, the difficulty to be met, was this—How shall the breach be healed, and the divided family of man be made one—one with God, and so one with each other; how shall the *disjecta membra* of the human race be brought together under one head; how shall those separate parts, these conflicting units, be gathered up into one grand unity; how, out of the ruins of the fall, shall there be erected a new temple, more enduring and more glorious than the first? This centre of unity, this new head, this

repairer of the breach, this builder of the temple, is Emmanuel. Let me be but united somehow to his person—and the gospel tells me how, through faith produced in my heart by the grace of the divine Spirit—and forthwith I become a member of that new family, of which God is the reconciled and spiritual Father, and Christ himself the elder brother. But the main point now before us is, how the person of the Mediator was constituted with a view to this. Mark, then, how the two constituent elements, the divine and human, conspire to this effect, and how this is brought out in the expression in the 23d verse—"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;" or, as it is said in the 20th verse, "that they may be one in us." *I in them;* how could this be, if he were not possessed of true manhood. *Thou in me;* how could this be, if he were not possessed of true Godhead. The person of Christ thus lays hold of both parties, and the glorious result is thus expressed, *that they may be one in us.* IN US; the whole majesty and mystery of the matter comes out here. IN US; this is the key-stone of this sublime arch that with rainbow span unites heaven and earth together. IN US; this is the foundation and measure of this union of which we speak,—this the proper order in this re-unit-

ing of long alienated parties: first the oneness of Christ—for it is the incarnate Son that is here spoken of and not the Eternal Word merely—with the Father; then the believer's oneness with Christ; and finally the believer's oneness with other believers, constituting the redeemed and sanctified church, or household of God. It is a universal fellowship this, including in one ample grasp the ever blessed and adorable Trinity, together with the whole family in heaven and earth —all saints, and not only all saints, but all angels, who seem also to be gathered under this new head, for the purpose of glorifying him, and ensuring their greater blessedness and stability. "That they all may be one in us; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee!" I will not venture to explain this union. There is nothing like it in nature. Symbolism here utterly fails us. There is no union so high, so holy, so intimate as this. Human language must therefore necessarily come short of a full setting forth of it. We may conjoin with it the terms, moral, mystical, and the like, but it is a theme fitted rather for adoring contemplation than for formal discussion. It is truly in a most deep and mysterious sense that believers become one with each other, and one with the Father and the Son. The word *identity*, I do not

like here; it savours of earth and its materialistic tendencies. We must really take care lest, in our anxiety to exalt this union, and to say fine things about it, we fall into something not unlike the Hindu doctrine of absorption, or into a species of evangelical pantheism. It becomes us to speak with reverence on such a subject. We must never lose sight of the distance between the finite and infinite. We must beware of using undue liberties with God, for he is in heaven and we are on earth, therefore ought our words to be few. But while we would avoid exaggeration, we would be far from explaining away the language of Scripture and depriving it of all meaning and reality. It is the Saviour himself who speaks in this wonderful passage of the relation subsisting between him and his Father, and between both and those *given to him*. And we would hear him with mingled faith and awe. We would not doubt that there is something real—far more real than our minds can yet conceive or express, in the language he uses on this occasion. We would listen to him with the spiritual ear. We would hear him speaking to us in the words of earth, but in the ideas of the spiritual and heavenly world. And as we thus sit in reverence at his feet, and ask him to make us feel, though we cannot utter to others,

nor shape in our own thoughts even, the divine truth and love which this prayer breathes—Oh! do we not experience an elevation of spirit which is heaven begun upon earth?—Do we not pass from the cold region of abstractions into the sphere of the personal, the heavenly, the divine? Are not earth's best unions and fellowships felt to be poor, to be shadowy and unsubstantial, in comparison with this new union and fellowship into which we are introduced? Does not some voice within us whisper that here only is the true, the real, the lasting, the everlasting? Yes; we feel that we are linked in indissoluble ties to the eternal throne, and the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour." We feel that we are somehow mysteriously bound up with the divine existence, and with that of all holy and intelligent beings renewed after the divine image, and formed to shew forth the divine glory!

In thus treating of Christianity as a fellowship—as the deepest and truest of all fellowship—we are led to take a very profound view of it; we are carried right into the very heart and core of it. We are furnished with the best possible antidote and counteractive to a mere formal, ceremonial, superstitious Christianity—a Christianity, that is, that rests in doctrines or ordinances, and never gets farther than what is external and sensible. There

is a great deal of such Christianity in the midst of us. There may be some sentiment, some beauty, some truth about it, but there is no deep fellowship in it. It does not bring you face to face with God, heart to heart with man. It rather comes between the soul and God, increasing the natural pride and selfishness of our nature. There is no depth in it, no warm affection, no genuine sympathy. It does not go down to the profoundest depths of the soul, awakening a new, inner life, and giving birth to a new, spiritual experience. And thus it is that we know no better test of one's religious state than this. Do you know anything of Christianity as a fellowship; has it become to you the basis of an union and communion with the spiritual world; has it lifted you above the sphere of which self is the centre, and drawn you towards a new divine centre, in relation to which, and as seen from which, "All old things are passed away, and all things are become new;" has it opened your heart, and taught you to love all that is holy and God-like, and to aspire after it? No unrenewed person can stand this test. He may stand many other tests, but not this one. Ah! we have spied the nakedness of the land. The formalist stands before us in all his nakedness. He feels this himself, and shrinks from the disclosure that has been made.

This view of Christianity as a fellowship is important also not only as revealing its essential character, but as exhibiting it in a truly grand and attractive light. It is a sublime privilege, this fellowship, to which it would introduce us all; and is not such fellowship the craving of every heart? Was not man made for it? Is he not possessed of capacities which fit him for the enjoyment of it? Is he not doomed to endless disappointment in seeking for it where it is not to be found? Is not this the secret wish of every human being, Oh! that I had some object with whom I might hold communion sweet, in whom I might discern the reflection of my own soul, from whom I might receive back again the expression of my own confiding affection? It is. And now mark how exactly Christianity is adapted to this want of our nature, this craving of our heart. If it did not provide this fellowship, it would come so far short of a perfect adaptation to humanity. It meets every one of us in our vain chase after this form of happiness, and invites us to taste of reconciliation with God, and to enter into the bosom of his spiritual family on whom he bestows his love, because they only are capable of relishing it; so that we may be able to say with all true believers, "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with

his Son Christ Jesus, and with one another." Let me but be at peace with God through faith in the great propitiation; let me cease to have fellowship with the world, which is the enemy of God; let me become possessed of spirituality of mind whereby I may be able to relish the society of a spiritual being, and forthwith my heart is at rest. I have now got the fellowship my soul was made for. This is what the gospel brings to us; and unless we have got this, we have hold of nothing. We have not entered into the spirit of Christianity as a religion of peace, of love, of confidence, of divine communion.

I call Christianity, then, a fellowship, because it restores me to fellowship with God, with nature, with man.

With God. It brings back to me, if I am a believer, the presence of Jehovah as of old in the garden of Eden. I walk with him in peace and friendship, as Adam did in its sacred bowers. He comes down at his own chosen times, and especially as he then did, in the hour of calm contemplation when the soul is set free from the world's business, and is desiring his presence—a holy calm most suitable for such communion; and I am not afraid of his coming. I no longer hide myself from him beneath some lying refuge, as unfit to screen me

from his observation, as the branches of the trees of Paradise. I know his voice, and it is music in mine ear, for it is the voice of love and not of terror; it has spoken forgiveness to my soul, and its accents no longer alarm me. I am at peace with God. I understand his nature; I love his authority; I desire conformity to his image; I look forward with joy to dwelling for ever in his immediate presence. This is religion. This is Christianity. I do fear—I greatly fear—there is very little of this fellowship with God sought after by us though the gospel has opened the way to it, and has made ample provision for its being enjoyed, especially in solemn ordinances; and because of this want of close fellowship with God, our souls are low in grace and in comfort. Let us know our privilege, and avail ourselves of it.

With nature. I think that none but a Christian can thoroughly understand and enjoy nature. Only a believer can enter fully into it, and hold communion with the spirit of order, and beauty, and love, that breathes and reigns through it all. Christianity does not forbid the enjoyment of nature. It does not represent nature as an unholy thing. It does not bid us look upon its fair and smiling face with a scowl. And why is it that the Christian can enter into the deepest fellowship with nature?

Because he can look upon its glories, "and smiling say, my father made them all." *Acquaint thyself with God,* is the profound sentiment of Cowper, than whom, notwithstanding the cloud that darkened so many of his years, no one ever had a more intense love for nature, simple, beautiful, holy nature,—*Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste his works.* This is the secret of the Christian's keen relish for every thing in nature, from the "meanest flower that scents the gale," up through endless forms and gradations of beauty and grandeur. He knows God, and he sees his hand and hears his voice in all things. He is at peace with him who made the world, and therefore he is at peace with the world itself. All nature is a revelation to him, where he reads of the Spirit who garnished those glorious heavens, and the Son, who upholds the whole fabric of creation, and the Father, who, with more than paternal care, opens his hand liberally, and satisfies the wants of every thing that lives. He cannot open his eyes but he sees some symbol that utters a great truth, or shadows forth a holy relation, or speaks of a high privilege or promise to be realised in a better world, or testifies in behalf of some divine perfection, or exhibits some impressive aspect of the divine character. So long as I am at war with God, I am at war with nature

too. How can it be otherwise? The curse rests upon me, and on every thing I engage in, for my sake. But when the curse is lifted up from me, how changed then is the face of all creation. My heart bounds with joy before this image of my Maker's and Redeemer's power. My soul leaps forth to hold converse with this wondrous frame of things. My pulse beats responsive to the great heart of nature. My voice mingles with its never ceasing anthem of praise. My spirit bows before the majesty of the indwelling and energizing Spirit,—no mere phantom, like the Platonic soul of the world, but the very Spirit of God, the life and light of all created things! I worship at its altar, but not the abstraction men call Nature. I worship the divinity that is enshrined in the temple—Him—the Living and Eternal One, who remains invisible to mortal eye, behind a veil of exquisite workmanship. Nature becomes to me a poem, a hymn, to which I can attune my soul, and which helps me to sing in louder strains the praises of my God and Saviour.

And with man. I believe there is no true sympathy, no true fellowship of heart beyond the pale of Christian influence. It is the gospel alone that destroys the selfishness of our nature, and teaches us to love one another out of a pure heart fervently. The deepest and truest fellowship is between Chris-

tian and Christian—a fellowship of love to an unseen Saviour, a fellowship of joys, and hopes, and fears, that lie quite beyond the circle of a natural man's experience. Real oneness of mind, true unity and community of soul, exists only within the spiritual family of God. In this deep sense we speak of Christianity as a fellowship, as a society formed on peculiar principles, and separated from the rest of the world,—chosen out of the fallen family of Adam. There is a loose way of talking of the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man, which is very dangerous, inasmuch as there is some truth mixed up with much error. It is very true that in a certain sense God is the father of all men; "have we not all one father; hath not one God created us?" It is also true that all men, in a certain sense, are brethren, being partakers of one common nature, and included alike in the offer of a common salvation. But there is a higher fatherhood than this, and a higher brotherhood than this, even that of grace, of faith, of regeneration. Christianity, therefore, is a fellowship, not merely as promulgating certain truths concerning the universal benevolence of the Deity, or concerning the original and innate equality of man, but as the appointed means of establishing upon earth a new family, a new society, where God is a father, and all the

members are his children, and each other's brethren, in a higher sense than nature knows. This new family, this new society, is the church. Here is that *higher unity* after which the world is striving. Here, and here alone, are to be found liberty, fraternity, equality,—*liberty*, in deliverance from sin, in its guilt and power; *fraternity*, in being all "the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus;" *equality*, in a joint participation of the blessings of the Saviour's purchase.

See what a beautiful picture of the unity, the oneness of the church is drawn by the apostle:—"There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This oneness, this perfect unity, is far indeed from being fully realised even in the church, which is the holy home of the only true fellowship that is to be found on earth. Nevertheless, there is a real, substantial, underlying unity in the church, throughout all its various parts, for this is essential to the true idea of a church. It is a spiritual, invisible unity, and therefore realisable only by faith. The world cannot realise it, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of God." But the Christian realises it, delights to think of it, and in spirit enters into

the communion of saints—that great doctrine of the primitive church—that grand privilege which is, I fear, made too light of in these latter days, and has, in fact, almost dropt out of the creed of Christendom. "I believe in the holy catholic church, and in the communion of saints." We all believe in this, or ought to do it. These are great truths, and faith should fasten upon them, and keep hold of them, not in any narrow, sectarian sense—which is not the true sense of them, but is a miserable travesty and perversion—but in a far deeper, truer, and more spiritual sense. And the full realization of this substantial, essential, inner unity, would lead more, perhaps, than anything else to bring about that more external, circumstantial, visible unity, the want of which is the great cause of grief to the believer, and of scandal to the world. It seems to be for this that the Saviour here prays. It cannot be for a mere outward, mechanical union, such as Rome boasts of, for there is no truth and reality in such an union. It is a base counterfeit, a practical lie, a mere make-believe. Neither can it be an union formed on worldly principles, and in the compromise of all that is valuable in the church's constitution, but it must be an union based on truth—an union including only those who are sanctified, set apart, brought out from the world.

As our Saviour prays—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Neither can it be an union based on what is fundamental and essential in Christianity; for this, as we have seen, exists already between all those who are in union with Christ. It must, therefore, be some such visible, formal, manifested union as shall command the notice and admiration of the world, and, what is more, shall command their faith and submission to the Redeemer. Something like this was exhibited by the apostolic church, and with the most astonishing results as affecting the triumph of the gospel. And we have only to conceive that this state of matters had continued for ages, to be convinced that it would have issued in the conversion of the whole world. Why did it not continue? This is a deep question. It touches on divine sovereignty, and we cannot answer it. For anything we can tell, higher ends may be attained by the altered state of things. For there is a sad and strange alteration. The visible church is broken up into fragments. The communion of saints is proportionally impaired. Christianity does not now appear in its full character as a fellowship, as a connecting link, as a binding cement; but rather as an element of division, in addition to the many other elements previously existing. I fear we have got too much reconciled

to this unseemly sight. I fear we do not feel as we ought the sin and the shame of this disunion. Nay, we are but too ready, many of us, to increase, and that on the most frivolous and unpardonable grounds, the divisions already existing. We have not the mind of Christ in this matter. It was not with satisfaction or indifference he looked, with prophetic eye, on what the church would become. He does not look with satisfaction on it now. Only mark what prominence he assigns in his intercessory prayer to this one topic. He dwells on it with more force and at greater length than on any other. He refers to it in the 11th verse. He returns to it again at the 21st verse, and devotes three whole verses to this engrossing theme. Yes, it filled his mind, and it should fill ours. It entered largely into his supplications, and it should enter largely into ours. Do we not learn from this that prayer, much prayer, earnest prayer, believing prayer, is the destined means for attaining this much to be desired union? It is God's own work. No reasoning or eloquence of man can accomplish it. This has been tried, and has failed. It is indeed a most Herculean task—a hopeless one, we are tempted to say, looking at it with the eye of reason. Many things have been tried. Has this been tried? Has there been enough of prayer among the people of

God? I believe not. We have gone about it too much in our own strength, and with unworthy, inferior motives. Let the church—the whole church—betake itself to prayer, and prayer will bring down the Holy Spirit, the author of all peace and concord. We must have more of the "communion of the Holy Ghost" before we have more of the "communion of saints." It is unbelief to doubt that such prayer would remain unanswered. It is unbelief to conclude that the petition offered up eighteen hundred years ago, *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee*, has been disregarded, and has become a dead letter—a thing that is past and gone, leaving no fruits behind. We dare not indulge a thought like this. We cannot let go the hope that a brighter era is coming for the church, when this prayer will be answered beyond our highest expectations. It is joy even to think of such a happy period of love, unity, and fellowship. What must it be to live in it! And we may see it. Yes, you and I may see it. All unlikely as it is in the view of unbelief, it may come, and that soon. It may burst upon our ravished gaze, and leave us exclaiming, "What hath God wrought!" And the world, too, will wonder at it—at such a phenomenon, utterly unaccountable on their princi-

ples. Ay, and I believe they will do more than wonder at it, they will believe; for I cannot persuade myself that when the Saviour said, *That the world may believe, may know that thou hast sent me, and loved me*, he meant nothing more than this, that materials would thereby be afforded for the world's deeper condemnation. Whatever others may think, I cling to the belief that this opens up a door of hope for this poor, unbelieving world of ours; that it is prophetic of that glorious era when "all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." I think it points to the taking away of a great let and hindrance in the way of the conversion of the world. I think it intimates that even the church itself is standing in the way of this most desirable consummation—a terrible thought, and one calculated deeply to humble us all; and that church revival, church purification, church union, must, according to the arrangements of infinite wisdom, precede the full triumph of the truth. The view I venture to take of it is this—the church is God's instrument for advancing his glory in the salvation of men, and this instrument must be rightly wielded if it would be effectual. Whatever interferes with the efficiency of this instrumentality interferes with its ultimate results. In spite of all

its imperfections, the church has done much for the world already. When it is more perfect, it will do more.

Meanwhile, let each believer seek for closer fellowship with Christ, and with all who are Christ's. Let each church draw nearer and nearer to its divine Head and Redeemer, and to all churches who hold the Head, and build on the one foundation. Let us all desire a more abundant baptism of the Holy Ghost. Let us all imbibe more of the spirit of the Saviour. Let us all come out more distinctly from the world's fellowship. Let us all submit more to the sanctifying power of the truth. Let us all enter more fully into the genius of Christianity as a system of unity and of love. And when our hearts are ready to fail us, as we think of the sore divisions and bitter estrangements that have crept into the one family, (a deep device of the great enemy!) let us encourage ourselves with this sublime supplication, and evermore plead it before the throne on high:—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the

glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

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